

Seventeenth Century



THE ART OF BOOK READING



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STELLA S. CENTER

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To

A. B. C.

Whose generous spirit
made this book possible

CONTENTS



SELECTIONS AND EXCERPTS



INTRODUCTION

The Art of Book Reading is addressed to men and women who can read, who, in fact, read very well, but who are interested in reading a greater variety of books with better comprehension and fuller appreciation—in a word, reading books with intelligent delight. It is safe to assume that there is room for improvement in everybody's reading, for actual performance almost always lags behind potentiality wherever mental effort is involved.

The procedures in reading outlined here were tested for a number of terms when I was director of the Reading Institute of New York University (1936–1950) and taught adult classes in the evening sessions. The registrants in the reading classes were college graduates, representative of a great variety of business and professional interests in the metropolitan area. All the students acknowledged a handicap in reading that interfered with their economic success, professional prestige, or personal growth. Their needs were varied; some wanted to read material of technical interest more efficiently; others wanted to read literature of a general nature unrelated to their strictly professional needs, in the interest of personal cultural growth; all were deeply concerned with extending the range and improving the quality of their vocabulary. Most of the students attached too much value to speed or rates of reading and needed indoctrination as to the place of speed in a program to improve reading skills. True to form, most of the students wanted a recipe to improve their memory. The instruction included lectures, discussions, home assignments for individual study. But whatever the student's background, profession, or age, whether the student was an admiral, a general, a college student, a dentist, a surgeon, an actor, an editor, a publisher, a teacher, a priest, a radio commentator, a business executive, a scientist, a manufacturer, a research specialist, a novelist, a poet, a nun, a housewife, a secretary—all unanimously agreed that competence in reading was basic to

achieving their goals and were willing to schedule evenings for sessions of instruction. If the procedures and materials formerly used with the adult classes are useful in pointing the way for readers of The Art of Book Reading to a still higher plane of thoughtful reading, its purpose will have been accomplished. Readers respond differently to suggestions and recommendations; each reader should follow the plan best suited to his educational background and interests.

The treatment of reading in The Art of Book Reading places reading in the category of an art to be acquired, its mastery taxing all one's resources—if mastery is commensurate with one's ability. Reading is the art most generally practiced. There are more readers than painters, musicians, architects, dancers, men of letters. In the United States, with a population of approximately one hundred and fifty million, about ten million adults, according to the last census figures, are illiterate; that is, unable to read beyond the fourth-grade level of the elementary school. One hundred and forty million practice the art of reading with varying degrees of success. Because it is so widely practiced, we easily lose sight of the fact that few people achieve the reading level that their innate abilities warrant. No one reads naturally, though some people seem to acquire the art more easily than others. Some children learn to read with such ease and even avidity that adults say that the children are "born readers," but proficiency in any art must be acquired; it is conceded that some children have much greater aptitude for reading than others.

Our civilization demands that everyone learn how to read; else he pays a great price for his failure. The non-reader or the reader with limited reading skill is cut off from active participation in the thought-life of his contemporaries to the extent that his reading skills and practice fall below his potentialities. The non-reader, the retarded reader, the laggard in reading, is automatically limited in the scope of his social and vocational activities.

The chapter on "Laying the Foundation for Critical Reading" is an account of the diagnostic and instructional procedures followed at the Reading Institute during the day sessions with two categories of students on the elementary, secondary, and college levels: those who were so handicapped by their disabilities in reading that progress in their education was effectually blocked; and those students who read

competently and yet had the ability, by reason of their excellent mentality, to read with finer insight and appreciation.

While millions of people in this country have the habit of reading, though with varying degrees of skill, it is easy to overlook the fact that reading is an art that must be studied and practiced with zeal and enthusiasm and intelligence if it is to be mastered. And because reading is an art, few are destined to scale the heights of reading artistry. While few in any field of creative activity achieve perfection, readership, as far as lies in one's power, should be achieved in the highest degree possible; else the unachieving reader lives a fractional existence in a two-dimensional world.

Publishers of books, newspapers, and magazines, editors, authors, printers, librarians, booksellers, and distributors of books, teachers of English and all other subjects, find their vocational justification and success closely bound up with the skills, taste, judgment, habits, economic level of the reader-consumer. Especially do writers need readers. Is it not obviously the sensible thing to recognize how essential the reader is, and therefore to encourage him, educate him, attract him, cajole him, to induce him to become a better reader of books? Instead of bewailing the factors that are said to interfere with reading, why not use the affirmative, constructive approach to the reader, and make reading irresistible?

Research in the social sciences is concerned today with the fate of the serious book in our social economy because of the indifference of the reading public toward those books that serve to enlighten the citizen. In spite of a rising educational level, the reading public does not offer the forward-looking publisher significant encouragement to produce books that affect the thinking of the nation to a marked degree.

Some students of the social sciences, as they contemplate the rivalry of other media of communication, the film, radio, television, wonder whether the book will not in time be relegated permanently to innocuous desuetude—to use a favorite phrase of the Cleveland administration. Some research specialists cite the rising cost of books, the absence of books in the home, the lack of time in a motor age to read, to explain the failure to read books.

Still other explorers into the causes of the neglect of the serious

book place the blame on the elementary and secondary schools and colleges, even insisting that the period immediately following graduation from college coincides with regression in the matter of quality and quantity of books read by college graduates. There is probably some validity in all these reasons advanced to explain the negative attitude of the public toward the best of books, contemporary and traditional.

The explanation of public indifference is, in my opinion, comparatively simple. People do not read serious books because they do not know how to read them. One must be a competent reader to derive profit and recreation from serious books that represent the best thinking of writers, past and present. The reader must attempt the kind of thinking similar to that of the authors when they wrote the serious books. While the reading level of the American public is low, the native intelligence is good—taking the country by and large as Mark Twain would say. The American public is capable of reading more competently books of greater maturity than it now reads. Reading performance lags behind mental ability.

The prospect, however, is hopeful; literacy can be achieved by providing sound instruction in how to read, by stimulating interest in what to read, and by creating a strong desire to read what is pleasurable and profitable. There is ground for a reasoned hope. Witness today the growing interest in reading—the initial factor in a program of improvement.

We need better instruction in reading in all educational institutions by teachers who are themselves discriminating readers, who regard reading as indispensable to their well-being, and who are able to serve as guides and mentors in helping young people to experience the satisfaction to be derived from reading. Probably no one can "teach literature," but the teacher-reader knows how to set the stage so that the immature reader may acquire the art of collaborating with the author.

To insure having such teachers, the tax-payer must be willing to pay the bill for their education and compensation, and for increasing the number of teachers in schools so that they can cope with sheer numbers of students. If the country continues a policy of mass education, it becomes an imperative necessity that students be taught the art of

reading so that they can proceed under their own power to acquire an education.

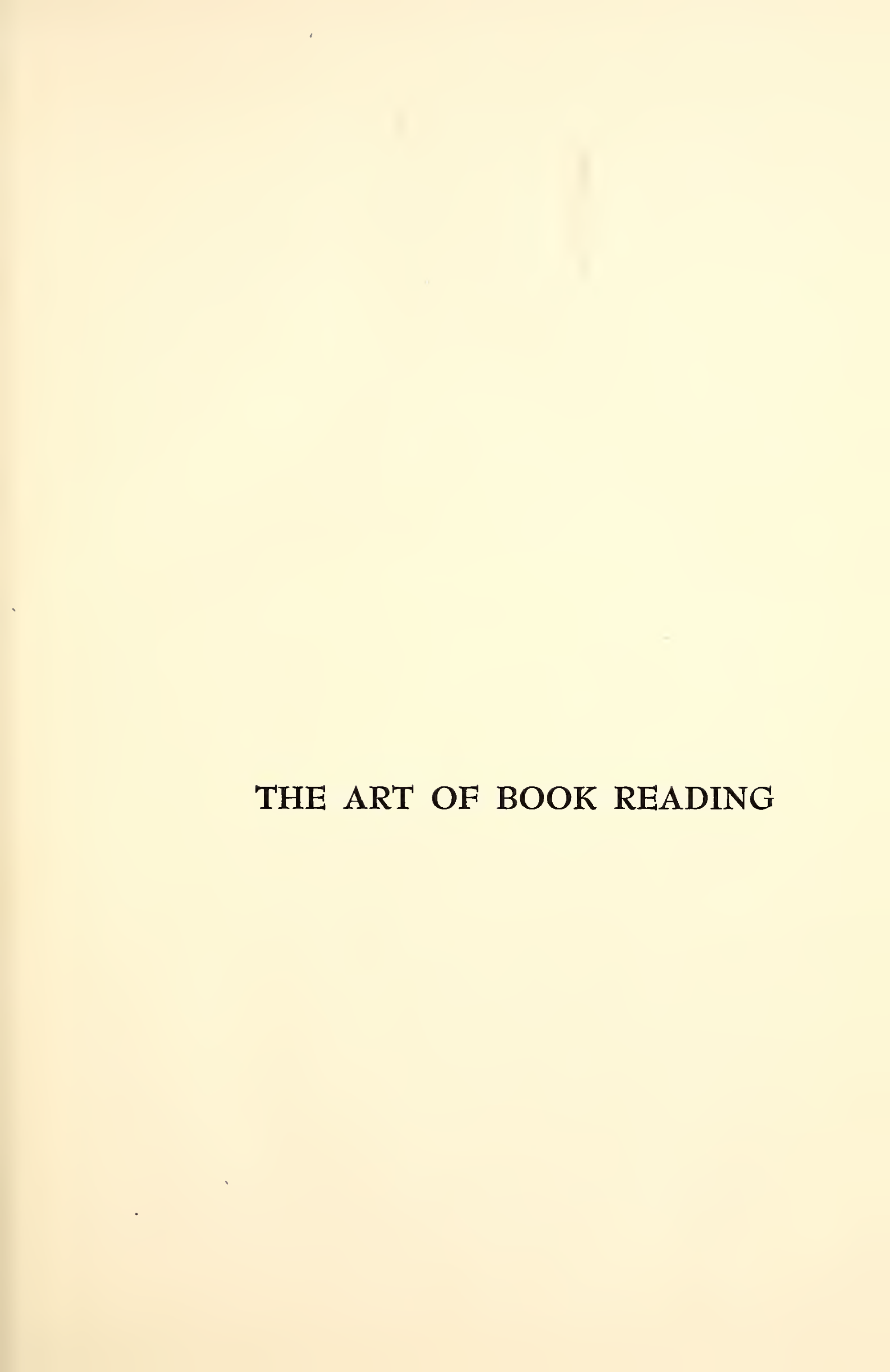
Clubs, societies, philanthropic and religious organizations, classes in adult education, accept the obligation to make their groups book-conscious, but their efforts could bear considerable acceleration. Newspapers and magazines carry columns of book notices and reviews. Could not reviewers of books, who are very competent readers, accept the two-fold responsibility not only of interpreting books but also of indicating to readers the technique of reading a specific book? The screen, radio, and television have already been enlisted in the service of books, but their contributions could be greatly developed and expanded and modified to advantage.

The program to make the public book-conscious can be condensed to three essentials: the public must know how to read books; there must be a strong will to read; the books must be made available. The responsibility rests on education, publishing, and book distribution. But it is in a framework of an aroused, enlightened, and convinced public opinion that the movement toward a higher level of literacy must be directed. Such a movement would yield extravagantly large returns on the investment in the durable satisfactions of life.

The student of political economy insists that raising the level of literacy of the whole electorate is a factor in creating and maintaining a democratic society, agreeing with Thomas Jefferson that "a nation that expects to be ignorant and free expects what never was and never will be." It is an electorate liberally educated and a free press that give security to a democratic society. It has been said wisely that there is only one thing to do in time of war: form your battalions and carry the fight to the enemy. Every generation must wage war against fear and greed and ignorance. Reading is the chief weapon in the constant warfare against ignorance.

Stella S. Center.





THE ART OF BOOK READING



CHAPTER I

★

THE HALLMARKS OF CRITICAL READING

Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest.
Book of Common Prayer:
Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent.

A READER becomes a critical reader only after years of experience in reading, for the critical sense, that is, the ability to understand, analyze, evaluate, and to form judgments, comes only with intellectual maturity. The critical reader recognizes the value of reading; he is a reading addict, with an irresistible compulsion to read. Reading is almost as essential to him as breathing.

It is this driving compulsion to read that enables the reader to overcome obstacles that might prevent his reading with intelligent delight. He will not submit tamely to the handicap of poor eyesight; if neither time nor place to read permits, he will create both, drawing on everything that he has learned or experienced in interpreting the printed page. He explores the meanings of new words with zest, disciplines his mind to concentrate under distracting circumstances, acquires the habit of reflecting about what he reads, and responds creatively to the stimulus of an awakened imagination and to the challenge of new ideas. Through the medium of the printed page, he takes possession of his cultural heritage; because books exist, the competent reader is a citizen of all times and places; he has perspective on the past and a realistic vision of the future; he does not live a two-dimensional existence in the present moment.

The critical reader comprehends not only the obvious, surface meaning, but he reads between the lines and grasps the implications of the author's meaning. An intuitive, penetrating insight makes him uncannily accurate in grasping the full force not only of what the writer states but also of what he implies. The sixth sense or intuition of intelligent readers enables them to penetrate beyond the area of intellectual content—the hard core grasped in common by all readers—and to explore the periphery that lies adjacent to the core. To do this, is to read with intelligent delight.

Stephen Tennant* in his introduction to *Willa Cather On Writing* describes Willa Cather, the reader:

> Her eye, her ear, were tuning-forks, burning-glasses, which caught the minutest refraction or echo of a thought or feeling. . . . She heard a deeper vibration, a kind of composite echo, of all that the writer said, and did not say.

Thoreau** conceived reading as "a noble intellectual exercise":

> To read well, that is to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object. Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written.
>
> Most men have learned to read to serve a paltry convenience, as they have learned to cipher in order to keep accounts and not be cheated in trade; but of reading as a noble intellectual exercise they know little or nothing; yet this only is reading in a high sense, not that which lulls us as a luxury and suffers the nobler faculties to sleep the while, but what we have to stand on tip-toe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to.

A body of rich and varied reading material helps the intelligent reader to interpret his experiences, and his experiences in turn serve as a touchstone in helping him to evaluate the worth of what he reads. The critical reader does not live in an ivory tower; he frequents the market, the forum, the exchange, believing that whatever concerns

* *Willa Cather On Writing* by Stephen Tennant. Copyright, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1949.

** *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau, The Modern Library, published by Random House, New York.

humanity is not alien to him. Like Ulysses, he is a part of all that he meets. He is not content with the average round of experiences, with the casual, superficial talk of the men and women of his daily association. He wants the multiplicity of human experiences possible only between the covers of a book because of the inexorably brief span of human existence. He longs to experience vicariously everything that man has experienced—even to commit crimes, and this he can do as a reader, according to Carlyle, without the inconvenience of a mud bath.

It is not the intention of The Art of Book Reading to say that all reading is solemn analysis, devoid of delight. The plea here is for intelligent delight. There are times to ignore analysis and "plunge soul-forward, headlong into a book's profound," to use Elizabeth Barrett Browning's phrase. Because reading is an art, it has a basis in one or more sciences. The intelligent practice of an art requires the understanding of basic principles and demands practice to perfect skills. The rewards, however, of critical reading are the compensations of the true artist. Such readers as Thoreau described derive much pleasure from reading, though they are thoughtful readers; pleasure and thoughtfulness are not mutually exclusive.

The first impulse of the experienced reader is to be alert to the author's purpose in a piece of writing. What is the goal of the author's thinking? his central idea? his thesis? How does a piece of writing justify itself? It stands finally or falls according to whether or not it has a valid theme. The reader expects the theme or *motif* to recur repeatedly so that the author's contention, his purpose, his controlling idea, the focus of his composition shall be unmistakable. If a piece of writing is confused as to its purpose, the critical reader dismisses it as unworthy of his time and attention. The purpose of reading is to discern what the author's mind intended, and it should be clear what the author intended. He should not imitate the artist in *Don Quixote*, who, on being asked the subject of his painting, replied, "That is as it may turn out." Unless the author knows the destination of his thinking, it will be impossible for the reader to arrive at any destination. "Discovering what the author's mind intended—the merest duty of politeness we owe to the great man addressing us. We should lay our minds open to what he wishes to tell; if what he

has to tell be noble and high and beautiful, we should surrender and let soak our minds in it."*

Another demand of the critical reader is that a piece of writing shall be well structured. The anatomy must be clear, obviously clear, like the profile of a tree in winter bare of leaves. The structure, the supporting frame, the organization, the skeleton, the blue print, the outline, the pattern, the design, call it what you will, is as essential to a piece of writing as the steel frame of a skyscraper, or the invisible skeleton supporting the sculptor's creation. The literary composition must stand up, four-square, and not be an amorphous mass of words. The thoughtful reader expects the various parts of the structure to be well articulated, so that one can see the relation of part to part, and of parts to the whole composition. Sometimes the writer fails to make the articulations smooth; sometimes the reader is compelled to supply the transitions, but the wise writer does not demand of the reader what he himself should provide. The fewer the interferences, the more effective the collaboration of author and reader.

The reader's approach to a piece of writing is a responsibility that he cannot reasonably evade. He cannot be passive or lackadaisical, and wait for the writer to come one hundred per cent of the way. The critical reader sets up the appropriate mind-slant, and establishes, if the composition permits, *rapport* with the author. The reader has the obligation to give the author a fair chance to transmit his message, but reserves the right to accept or reject the offering of the author; a hospitable frame of mind is the *sine qua non* of understanding a piece of writing, as indispensable as it is in a conversational setting. We cannot understand if we are bristling with opposition before we give the author the opportunity to present the result of his thinking. The success of communication rests only partly with the writer, according to Virginia Woolf.

> Do not dictate to your author; try to become him. Be his fellow worker and accomplice. If you hang back and reserve and criticize at first, you are preventing yourself from getting the fullest possible value from what you read. But if you open your mind as widely as possible, these signs and hints of almost im-

* *On the Art of Writing* by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. Copyright, 1916, by G. P. Putnam's Sons.

> perceptible fineness from the twist and turn of the first sentences, will bring you into the presence of a human being unlike any other.*

Charles Lamb voiced his agreement when he wrote of the "implied and unwritten contract between author and reader." Good sportsmanship demands that the reader respect the contract; else, why read? In a hospitable frame of mind, the reader adds his thinking and experience to the writer's production, and the result is the collaborative product of two minds. There are as many works with the same title as there are readers of the original work. This collaboration is creative reading. And while the reader should be accessible, the writer must employ all his skill to overcome the inertia of the reader.

The critical reader has a decided sensitiveness to style; he is a mortal of acute sensibility, responsive to light and shadow, to subtleties of manner and nuances; the tone, the tempo, the emotional atmosphere of a piece of writing will attract or repel him. Experienced writers feel instinctively the style that is appropriate and that will reinforce the thought, as a stage setting helps the theatre-goer to grasp the quality and texture of a dramatic production. Style imparts texture to the fabric of the composition; the critical reader senses the style and responds to the feel of the composition. In fact, style is a significant factor in creating *rapport* of author and reader—even camaraderie.

Words are the medium with which the writer works. They serve him as paint, or marble, or sound serves the painter, the sculptor, the musician. A writer is fortunate to have the varied, flexible medium of the English vocabulary as his vehicle of expression. It is equally important that the reader possess a rich and varied vocabulary. The essential meaning of a passage may be closed to a reader if he does not comprehend what the words denote and connote. One should know not only the meaning of a word as the dictionary gives it, isolated from context, but also the variations in meaning when in juxtaposition with other words. The critical reader cannot be complacent about his reading vocabulary; there must be a continuous systematic effort to extend the range and improve the quality of his word power.

* *The Second Common Reader* by Virginia Woolf. Published by Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York. Copyright, 1932.

Probably it is the lack of an adequate reading vocabulary, more than any other deficiency, that frustrates the efforts of readers to penetrate the meaning of thoughtful, challenging reading material, even when they are interested in the content of the passage. The reader with a meager vocabulary encounters new, difficult words, and he balks like a horse unable to clear a barrier, with the result that the casual reader gives up, claiming that the material is uninteresting. Both writer and reader must master their medium of communication—words. But as the serious student of semantics knows, the mastery of the medium of communication is still a remote goal.

Much attention has been centered recently on the study of grammar, not the study of parsing or describing the individual word in detail, but the study of syntactical relationship of word to word—the structure of the sentence which reveals the logic of it. Many a would-be reader fails because he does not sense the grammar of a sentence—the logical relationship of word to word; hence the sentence conveys no meaning, or else an erroneous meaning. It is difficult to see how one can be a competent reader if he is not versed in this aspect of grammar—the relation of the structural elements that compose the sentence. The subject of the sentence may be removed by several lines of print from the predicate, but if the reader does not connect the two, he mires down in a morass of words, words, words. Coordinate phrases and clauses must be coordinate in thought to the reader; else he and the author are at cross purposes, and communication breaks down. The discipline of the study of grammar is a prime requisite to reading mature material with understanding.

It is equally necessary that the reader be cognizant of paragraph structure, so that he can anticipate the way in which the author presents his thought—his method of approach and procedure. The paragraph is a unit of the long composition. It possesses purpose and structure and fits into the whole composition in a way that promotes the dynamic flow of the author's thought, "the long line," according to Aaron Copland. Sometimes the critical reader is almost stopped in his pursuit of the author's thought if the structure of the paragraph does not help to make the progress of the thought clear. The experienced reader expects concrete instances or specific details to follow the statement of a generalization. Or if the writer shifts his point of

view in describing an object, the reader shifts with him. If the writer chooses to fly over a terrain and present a progressively unfolding landscape, the reader flies in his imagination. The author may present a series of happenings in a chronological sequence; the reader vicariously experiences each event. An awareness of the nature of the author's procedure prevents the reader's stumbling or groping, reading word by word or sentence by sentence, wondering in what direction the author is moving. The attitude of expectancy furnishes the soundest basis for developing the proper rate or speed at which a piece of writing should be read.

The critical reader distinguishes between reading material of a factual nature and *belles lettres*. Each demands its own reading techniques. He goes further into the classification of reading materials, and notes the characteristics of each literary type, as well as the distinguishing marks of the time-honored types of discourse, knowing that each requires its own approach and technique. But the various materials demand flexibility from the reader, just as the skill of adaptation plays a significant rôle in all human relationships.

The competent reader achieves growth by practice in applying his reading skills to increasingly mature materials with greater insight into the implications beyond surface meanings. Unless there is growth in perception, there is arrested mental development. Adults may become more experienced in areas of social and economic activities; they may remove their limitations to some extent by travel; but the inescapable conclusion is that they are dwarfed intellectually if they cannot read widely a great variety of reading materials that embody the best thinking of the race. Intellectual dwarfing is as disturbing and as undesirable as its physical counterpart. Intellectual growth through reading is a prime characteristic of the critical reader. Failure to achieve intellectual growth through the reading of significant books forces the non-reader, or the retarded reader, to depend for ideas and information on the newspaper, the radio, television programs, conversational encounters in the course of the daily routine, the unpredictable best seller. At best, without reading there is an intellectual stalemate; more often there is actual regression. The failure to achieve intellectually in accordance with one's native endowment is often accompanied by a lack of imagination and emotional sensibility.

Lessening the gap between his potentiality and his accomplishment is characteristic of the intelligent reader.

The mental and moral stagnation and vegetation that result from "easy reading" incurred the wrathful irony of Thoreau especially as he considered the popular novel of his day, "the nine thousandth tale about Zebulon and Sophronia, and how they loved as none had ever loved before, and neither did the course of their true love run smooth." Then he turned on the readers of these romances:

> All this they read with saucer eyes, and erect and primitive curiosity, and with unwearied gizzard. . . . The result is dullness of sight, stagnation of the vital circulations, and a general deliquium and sloughing off of all the intellectual faculties.*

Educational leaders, responsible for teen-age education, should bear in mind the fact that unless the right reading habits and taste and skills are developed before the age of approximately twenty, the probability is strong that they will never be properly developed. The interest of youth in adventure, its longing for multifarious experiences, its quick response to wise guidance, its insatiate curiosity as to what lies ahead, predispose young people to reading, and the failure of the intellectually superior to become critical readers who read with intelligent delight must be laid at the door of the adults who are responsible for the education and guidance of young people. Expertness in reading should be the *sine qua non* in licensing teachers. They should be readers of a high order, regardless of their field of special interest. Of course, there is a high correlation between one's intelligence and one's reading potentiality; one's mental limits impose reading limitations, for reading is thinking, controlled thinking under the stimulus of the printed page. A canvass of critical readers will probably reveal the fact that they became avid readers before the age of twenty.

The child is doubly fortunate whose interest in books and reading is developed long before the teen-age is reached, and this is possible if both the home and the school recognize their responsibility in promoting interest in reading. Books should be regarded as indispensable furnishings of a home, the book-shelves ranking as high as bed and

* *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau, The Modern Library.

table in importance. Perhaps more children might become competent readers if they were not limited for years to feeding on the fatuous inanities of the average school reader that sets forth in meticulous detail the obvious and the trivial. The story of Clarence Day's opinion of his first reading text-book is well known, and many an intelligent child has had similar experiences. At the age of six, eager to respond to the magic of the printed word, Day was disappointed to discover that those little black marks said, "The boy has a ball." "Well," he said, looking at the illustration, "you don't need to read to know that."

It is an axiom that the mind, like the body, grows by what it feeds on. Text-books in reading too frequently stultify a child's intelligence, and the dull content is not remedied by garish illustrations of the texts, as some publishers think. If we are to become a nation of adult readers, reform should be initiated in the primary grades. Valiant efforts have been made in recent years to improve the quality of reading instruction, but any national survey of the reading habits of adults as to the kind of newspapers and magazines that they read, their use of library facilities, the quality of a large number of best sellers, will leave little ground for complacency.

Many high school and college students admit readily that they have never voluntarily read a book. Deans of colleges are emphatic in stating that much of the failure in college today is due to the fact that college students cannot cope with the printed page. The prospect of the child's becoming the adult critical reader is improved if he receives wise guidance during his elementary and secondary school years.

One of the most damaging influences exerted today on young people, certainly on their reading taste, is that of the comics, and most vicious of all comics are those that distort the classics with their illiterate English and crude drawing. Those comics that distort books worth reading are most deserving of scathing criticism. Unthinking parents are misled into believing that comic versions familiarize the child with literature. This is a delusion, and what is worse, the comic versions make it almost impossible for the child in later years to read the classics with appreciative insight. The comic is the essence of ugliness, and ugliness blunts the sensibilities of the reader. The reader of the comics is so accustomed to horror and violence that he becomes

insensitive to varying intensities of emotion, and callous to experiences devoid of violence. Perpetual cacophony may destroy the musician's ability to discriminate between sounds.

It is a popular fallacy today to charge indifference to the classics to the way in which they are taught in secondary schools. Such an indictment finds a responsive press. But a wide experience in educational systems in different sections of the country, on elementary, secondary, and college levels, prompts a just tribute to the teachers of English in the United States. They have kept their bearings in schools that vainly attempt to do almost everything for the student independently of the home and the church; teachers of English have fought the good fight almost single-handed. In the preservation of the humanistic tradition, they have struggled to impart through the study of the English language and literature the mental disciplines honored today more in the breach than in the observance. Let the skeptic read the tribute that Bernard de Voto paid his teacher of English, and remember that his story and many like it cancel the flippant charge that teachers of English have ruined the classics. On the contrary, many an adult who reads with intelligent delight acknowledges his debt to his teacher of English who guided him to a peak in Darien. If the level of literacy is low in the United States, we should remember the numerous forces that pull against English instruction in schools, and should reinforce the efforts of teachers of English rather than point the accusing finger.

The critical reader finds the pursuit of ideas a thrilling experience, and is filled with gratitude to an author who opens up a new heaven and a new earth to him. If a keen interest in ideas can be aroused in teen-age readers, their reading salvation will be assured. They will read with intelligent delight as long as they live and will never experience the lack of intellectual resources. William James gave all readers good advice: "Get your mind whirling [with ideas] and see what happens."

The adult reader cannot overlook the necessity of acquiring the skill to adapt his speed or rate of reading to the material or his purpose. Every reader has his own speed; it is an individual matter. Not everything should be read rapidly, as some recent texts on reading insist; on the other hand, there is no virtue in reading everything

slowly. The expert reader acquires flexibility in the matter of speed and instinctively adapts his rate to the tempo of the author's composition and to his own response to what he reads. But many adults read everything at the same rate, in a stolid, word-by-word fashion, because they became habituated in childhood to word-by-word reading, and were trained chiefly in oral reading, which is extremely slow in comparison with silent reading. The critical reader is never conscious of the technique of speed as he reads. Sometimes the undertow of a rapid narrative sweeps him along; sometimes he slows down to a word-by-word attack on difficult technical material. There is no virtue in speed as such; the goal of all reading is empathy with the content and the spirit of the material read—identification and projection.

The same principles underly all the arts. What Aaron Copland* wrote about the creative process in music applies with equal force to the creative process in reading. "There are," he wrote, "certain normal structural molds on which to lean for the basic framework of composition."

> But whatever the form the composer chooses to adopt, there is always one great desideratum: the form must have what in my student days we used to call *la grande ligne* (the long line). It is difficult adequately to explain the meaning of that phrase to the layman. To be properly understood in relation to a piece of music, it must be felt. In mere words, it simply means that every good piece of music must give us a sense of flow—a sense of continuity from first note to last. Every elementary music student knows the principle, but to put it into practice has challenged the greatest minds in music! A great symphony is a man-made Mississippi down which we irresistibly float from the instant of our leave-taking to a long foreseen destination. Music must always flow, for that is part of its very essence, but the creation of that continuity and flow—that long line—constitutes the be-all and end-all of every composer's existence.

The whole composition must be a coherent, unified whole. Every piece of writing must have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and the reader must have some sense of where he is in relation to the

* From *What to Listen for in Music* by Aaron Copland. Copyright, 1939, by McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.

three essential parts of every composition. He should recognize the recurrent theme, the subordinate ideas, the development of the ideas, the transition from part to part, but unless the reader is conscious of "the long line," the steady, continuous flow, as he reads, he will miss one of the most satisfying rewards of reading. And any writer who fails to supply the reader with "the long line" merits the neglect that the intelligent reader bestows on him.

While the mature reader insists on assembling his own collection of books that reflects his growth and maturing taste, he avails himself from time to time of the services of libraries and librarians. He is skillful in making use of the resources of libraries. But his interest in libraries is not selfish, for he recognizes the library as a strong arm of the service in the struggle for greater literacy.

Any discussion of reading would be singularly incomplete if it failed to record the obligation of society to the daily, nightly, round-the-year services rendered by librarians to boys and girls, men and women, throughout our western civilization. Librarians possess an aggregation of virtues that enables them to become *liaison* officers between the various agencies of society, business, professional, social, cultural, and the individual man or woman who needs the reinforcement of books. Anyone who has made extensive use of libraries has been impressed by the apparently inexhaustible patience of librarians, their cheerfulness, their breadth of interests, their genuine desire to serve people, young and old. Of course, there are so-called librarians who are merely good housekeepers, bent on meticulous order and system; fortunately, there are few of them. Librarians constitute a fine professional group who are contributing significantly toward making this nation a literate civilization. In recent years, their professional meetings and courses of study, as well as their research have focused attention on the problems of reading instruction with a thoroughness rivalling that of the teaching profession. It is an encouraging sign that many systems of education make provision for the teacher-librarian who initiates young readers in how to use the resources of the library intelligently and introduces them to books of lasting influence.

Librarians seem especially gifted in making their surroundings attractive, recognizing the fact that reading is an art that can be pursued congenially in an environment that recognizes the kinship

of other arts—sculpture, music, painting, etching, architecture, storytelling. Just as the cathedral in the Middle Ages dominated the skyline, so today in the United States the school building and the library in village, town, city, occupy a conspicuous place in American communities and pay mute homage to the influence of books.

Librarians have been able in recent years to reinforce education where it has been weakest; they have given readers individual guidance, counsel, and direction, impossible in classes so large that the teacher must often struggle to identify the individual child in the crowd.

No writer has bestowed greater praise on the pleasures and satisfactions to be derived from reading than Virginia Woolf who contemplates arriving in Heaven with a book under her arm.*

> Are there not some pursuits that we practice because they are good in themselves, and some pleasures that are final? And is not this among them? I have sometimes dreamt, at least, that when the Day of Judgment dawns and the great conquerors and lawyers and statesmen come to receive their rewards—their crowns, their laurels, their names carved indelibly upon imperishable marble—the Almighty will turn to Peter and will say, not without a certain envy when He sees us coming with our books under our arms, "Look, these need no reward. We have nothing to give them here. They have loved reading."

* *The Second Common Reader* by Virginia Woolf. Published by Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York. Copyright, 1932.

CHAPTER II

★

A PROGRAM OF ACTION

> Of all the inanimate objects, of all men's creations, books are the nearest to us, for they contain our very thought, our ambitions, our indignations, our illusions, our fidelity to truth, and our persistent leaning towards error.
>
> *Notes on Life and Letters*
> by Joseph Conrad

THE preceding chapter, "The Hallmarks of Critical Reading," attempts a functional definition of the kind of readers we should like to be. But as in every art, we sense the discrepancy between the actual performance and the perfect accomplishment; the gap, even if it may be perceptibly lessened, always remains. The difficulty, however, in achieving artistry should not deter a reader from undertaking a program of action that will enable him to attain reading skills that bear a closer relationship to his potentialities.

There are adults who cannot remember how or when they began to read. They have always read with profit and pleasure, just as some writers conform to the conventions of good writing without being aware of the rules and formulas of composition. But the "born" readers and writers are in the minority. THE ART OF BOOK READING is addressed to the large majority of readers who are interested in a program of suggestions to improve the quality and range of their reading. No book about reading has all the answers; reading is an individual experience, and at best all that any book on reading can

do is to outline practices and suggest procedures that many students have tested and found helpful. It is wise to develop a critical attitude toward one's own reading and set to work to find out how to collaborate intelligently with authors. If an adult is conscious of his shortcomings as a reader, he need not be discouraged. The minimal essentials in a program of reading improvement are books, intelligence, will power, and considerable industry.

As The Art of Book Reading is, after a fashion, a transcript of what occurred year after year in my adult classes at New York University, I shall, without apology, give the chapter a somewhat autobiographical slant. I shall record my observations of students and outline what seemed of value to them.

For most students, the academic year begins in September. They are eager to make a brave new beginning in becoming better educated. In every class there are various personalities; yet over the years certain characteristics appear and reappear, so that an instructor is able to formulate some generalizations about adult students. Because they are under no compulsion whatever to register, and are willing to spend several hours each week attending class, preparing home assignments, and pursuing suggestions for independent reading, it seems a logical assumption that all would make conspicuous gains in reading. Honesty compels me to admit that the gains were correlated to a high degree with a student's ability to work and especially with his capacity to stick to his self-imposed task. The students constituted a delightful audience; they were pleased to have an instructor talk about reading and interpret stimulating articles. My chief concern was to induce each student to read and re-read selections, analyze them, and thus acquire a sense of growing power that comes only with independent action. I had to insist that one does not learn to read by sitting on the side lines and observing the instructor in action. This insistence was based on the conviction that self-education, stimulated and directed by a teacher, is the best education.

Adult students of reading have their assets and their liabilities. Among the assets of superior adults should be listed self-motivation, sustained interest in reading, endurance in maintaining unbroken hours of study, years of experience that serve as a touchstone in evaluating the worth of what is read, mature and intelligent cooperation

with a program of instruction, ability to make rapid progress, their elation resulting from experiencing success—all these assets of numerous students I have noted repeatedly in classes of reading instruction.

But it is necessary to face realistically the liabilities of other adult students of reading. Some have a distorted conception of speed or rate of reading; they are so conscious of the march of time and of the vast amount still to be read that they overestimate the value of speed of reading. There is the adult reader who would take refuge in the consolation that because he reads slowly he therefore comprehends better and remembers exactly. Another tendency on the part of the unskilled reader is to label as "boring" all books that tax his powers of thinking and reflection. An incident that occurred at Columbia University, recorded by Mr. Krutch,* describes how Raymond Weaver dealt with readers who were easily bored.

> The late Professor Raymond Weaver laid the first stone of his fabulous reputation among the students of Columbia College on the occasion of the first quiz which he gave to his very first class just after the First World War, when sophomores were more than usually sophomoric. When the first question went up on the blackboard it was, "Which of the books read so far has interested you least?" and a whistle of joy went up from a group which had been trying to make things hard for a new instructor. After a dramatic pause Weaver wrote the second and last question. It was: "To what defect in yourself do you attribute this lack of interest?"

Nearly all adult students make a good initial attack in trying to acquire new habits of reading, but many find it difficult to maintain sustained effort over a considerable period of time. In a race, it is not the start but the finishing that counts. In many instances, adult students have responsibilities that distract their minds and make inroads on their time and physical strength. The adult who wants to improve his reading must not be faint-hearted, for he is trying to do differently something that he has been doing in a fixed way all his life. Now he attempts to change a habit—in fact, break the shell in which he is encased. Many adults, prompted by a laudable ambition, register for courses, pay fees, attend sessions, but the miracle of change does not

* *The Nation:* January 13, 1951. "Essays and Asides" by Joseph Wood Krutch.

occur unless the student can sustain a high-powered will to motivate the wish and insure perseverance.

Many students of reading are disappointed if they do not receive a formula that provides immediate assistance in how to read charts, financial reports, legal documents, business letters, technical treatises, text-book material, even magazines and the daily newspaper. My experience in directing programs of reading improvement prompts me to warn prospective students of reading that the first step is to become more skillful as a general reader of a wide variety of materials, with attention to the techniques that insure effective comprehension. The second step is to apply the principles underlying efficient reading of general materials to technical materials as far as the general and technical materials have characteristics in common. There are no short cuts to efficient, critical reading.

This discussion of reading procedures places emphasis on accurate comprehension of ideas and concepts expressed in a variety of reading materials. The first stage of the study is concerned with a short unit of composition, the paragraph, a unit long enough to illustrate structure and to exemplify the development of an idea, according to the principles embodied in the long composition. I found it necessary to insist on the student's getting the precise idea of the text, and to discourage rambling discussions that travelled far from the main idea of the paragraph. Requiring the student to condense a paragraph to a single complete sentence was good discipline; it was mental setting-up exercises that brought rewarding results.

From practice in reading paragraphs, the second step in systematic study is to become acquainted with sentences of all kinds, grammatical and rhetorical. The study of the paragraph indicates the need to understand sentences, the small units composing the larger units; paragraphs in turn are the structural units of the long article. The study of the paragraph comes first as its chief purpose is to express ideas; the study of the individual sentence tends to focus attention on technical details. No program of reading instruction will succeed unless the chief emphasis is on grasping ideas and incorporating them in the reader's thinking. It is interest in ideas that motivates the mastery of technicalities.

One stumbling block in reading sentences is the lack of a knowledge

of sentence structure; that is, syntax, word relationship. So much that the serious student wants to read is expressed in long sentences with the main idea amplified and qualified by subordinate phrases and clauses that it is necessary to review the part of grammar that deals with the structural elements composing a sentence. I do not advocate the repetitious parsing of the individual word so much in vogue more than half a century ago, a time usually referred to as "the good old days of the little red school-house," but I am insisting that the reader who aspires to maturity in reading must know the structural elements that compose a sentence and their relation to one another, as the architect and the contractor know their building materials and the purpose each serves. Words in syntactical relationship constitute the medium of communication employed by the speaker and the writer. The mastery of the medium is indispensable to the craftsman and the artist.

For both the writer and the reader, mastery of subordination of clauses is an imperative necessity. Mature reading demands that we see how the subject and the predicate are modified, defined, restricted, qualified by subordinate clauses and phrases; else the main idea does not emerge, silhouetted boldly against a background of words. Not to know the structure of a sentence results in a vague, confused, and usually erroneous impression of what is read. It is encouraging to note that once the intelligent student is initiated in the study of grammar, the subject can become one of absorbing interest.

The next stage of the study proceeds to the consideration of factual, informational articles covering a variety of interests. The student accepts the study of how to read articles about science, discovery, vocations, economics, politics, because they seem closely related to his everyday routine and the demands on him. The study of the sentence and the paragraph defines the principles and techniques underlying the reading of informational articles and is preliminary to the reading of literature. There is, usually, little debate as to the author's meaning in factual material, and the student can be held rigidly to account for getting meaning accurately from factual articles. The appeal is mainly to the intellect, with the emotional element of literature reduced almost to the vanishing point.

It is logical to proceed next to the reading of literature, for the approaches, the mental slant, the critical analysis applicable to informational materials can be utilized by the reader of literature, but the emotional and imaginative appeal triples the demand on him.

In a program of reading instruction, the best ways in which an adult can enrich his vocabulary should receive considerable attention, word-study being an integral part of all programs for improving reading. Words should be studied in their contextual setting. The whole attack on reading should be cumulative. The thesis of THE ART OF BOOK READING is that reading and writing are complementary arts, and by understanding the author's purpose, his approach, his organization, his style, his tempo, his vocabulary, the reader will be able to accomplish a more effective collaboration with the author.

A glance at the table of contents will show that the foundations of expert reading are not overlooked; while no adult should be deterred from the study in his mature years, yet he is fortunate if he became established in sound reading practices in the elementary and secondary stages of his education. Adults who appreciate the value of good reading habits and taste in our political and social economy should insist on better teaching of reading in schools and colleges and cooperate with educational authorities in making liberal provision in school budgets for reading instruction of all students, the retarded, the mediocre, and the superior.

In the study of reading techniques, an effort has been made to find highly readable selections to serve for illustration and practice, in the firm conviction that even conscientious study of dull material will not make readers. No program of reading instruction will succeed unless the experience is satisfying and appeals to the student's individual taste and interests.

THE ART OF BOOK READING is not a book of literary criticism. It is not a presumptuous effort to suggest to writers how they should write. It is, however, an effort to negotiate a better understanding between readers and authors with the emphasis on the reader's obligation to approach the author's product with intelligence and imagination and open-mindedness. This book does not ask for appeasement in behalf of the reader. He must be encouraged to try to rise to the level of great

books. Reading is a rewarding experience, with compensations for the efforts of the reader to become the competent, critical, perceptive reader of abundant ability.

It is only the reader with competent reading ability who can achieve a liberal education, the education that liberates the individual. It is perhaps bringing proverbial coals to Newcastle to attempt to add to the definitions of a liberal education, but its relation to reading needs to be reiterated in a nation of limited reading accomplishment.

Only that man can hope to secure a liberal education who has the mastery of two sets of symbols: the literate symbol, the letter, an element in word formation; and the numerical symbol, the figure, the equation, the letter that has a numerical significance. The mastery of symbolization, the very essence of human thinking, is the mark of the liberally educated man. But the possession of tools is not enough; the master of tools is merely equipped to acquire a liberal education. This discussion is concerned with letters, the word, the literate symbol. In spite of differences of opinion as to what knowledges a man of liberal education must possess, what virtues, what attitudes, what obligations he must accept, there is complete agreement that one cannot have a liberal education unless he can read; he must know humanity in order to know himself and he must know his environment; to this end, he must study the Humanities, mathematics, and science. It is possible to achieve a high degree of integrity, a large measure of common sense, a philosophical attitude toward the vicissitudes of life, a rare degree of spirituality, without acquaintance with what lies between the covers of books, but no one can acquire a liberal education unless he can read great literature with comprehension and appreciation.

The old form of *read* was *rede*, meaning advice. It is by means of books that great minds, past and contemporary, advise the individual man how he can avail himself of the garnered wisdom of the race and thus take possession of his cultural heritage. If he is a mature reader, he has a rich inheritance to invest in living.

The price to be paid for a liberal education is learning how to read and then using the art to read what is eminently worth reading. In one sentence, Milton defined a liberal education: "I call therefore a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly,

skillfully, and magnanimously all the offices both private and public of peace and war."

The sponsors of the educational program of the Ford Foundation recently formulated their definition of a liberal education:

> The ruling end of a general, liberal education should be the development in young men and women of the capacity to make informed and appropriate judgments in the principal spheres of life. A liberal education should provide the knowledge and develop the competences which will lead to the exercise of wisdom in adult life.

The value of a liberal education in a civilization that is becoming more and more literate is hardly debatable, but a liberal education is an impossibility without highly developed skills in reading.

Before proceeding to read the following pages, I recommend that you attempt a self-analysis, a critical appraisal of your own reading. How do you answer the following questions?

1. *Do you read everything slowly, word by word?*
   Or do you adapt your speed or rate of reading to the material and your purpose?

2. *Do you forget what you read?*
   Or, if the material is worth remembering, can you recall the gist of it after an interval of time?

3. *Do you encounter so many new words that you are discouraged about reading?*
   Or have you acquired the skill of inferring the meaning of a word from the context?

4. *Do you limit your reading to one kind of reading material?*
   Or do you read a variety of newspaper articles, magazines, books?

5. *Do your eyes tire after you have read for a short time?*
   Or can you focus with ease for a considerable period of time?

6. *Does your mind wander when you read? Is your attention easily distracted?*
   Or can you concentrate your attention? Have you a long attention span?

7. *Do you have difficulty in comprehending what you read?*
   Or can you get the gist of what you read?

8. *As you read, do you see merely a mass of words?*
   Or do you see the organization of the material, the author's plan or outline or blue-print?

9. *Do you read the same kind of material, of the same maturity, year after year?*
   Or does your reading provide evidence of your increasing maturity and ability to cope with profound material?

10. *Is reading, for you, merely a form of escape? Is your recreational reading limited to cheap fiction?*
    Or do you find that you read the great books with increasing satisfaction?

The student of western civilization, with its increasing emphasis on the value of reading proficiency, is reminded that several generations ago Thomas Carlyle recognized training in reading as the chief, inescapable obligation of all educational institutions.

> If we think of it, all that a university, or final highest school can do for us, is still but what the first school began doing, teach us to *read*. We learn to *read*, in various languages, in various sciences; we learn the alphabet and letters of all manners of books. But the place where we are to get knowledge, even theoretic knowledge, is the books themselves! It depends on what we read, after all manner of professors have done their best for us. The true university of these days is a collection of books.*

* *Heroes and Hero Worship* by Thomas Carlyle.

CHAPTER III

★

HOW TO READ PARAGRAPHS

> Human destiny is a race between ordered thought made effective through education on the one side, and catastrophe on the other.
>
> *The New America, The New World*
> by H. G. Wells

THE discerning reader who is determined to read with still greater discernment can spend time profitably in studying the various ways by which writers organize and develop the paragraph, the small structural unit of a long composition. In this discussion, a paragraph is considered as a group of related sentences, not the single speech of conversation.

Like all adults who try to change the pattern of a long-established habitual activity, the student-reader will proceed slowly and self-consciously in the analysis of paragraphs. In time, with practice, however, he will quickly recognize the paragraph pattern and make an automatic adjustment to it, using the reading-approach inherent in the material. He will seize the essential idea, and, if the composition permits, will point his mind forward to the destination of the author's thinking. The important thing in reading paragraphs is to recognize the focal point from which the whole paragraph rays out; this is getting the substance of it.

But the wise reader is never trapped by the author's formula and therefore he is not curtailed in his spontaneous approach and response.

He retains his flexibility and his power to make adjustment. It is advisable to study critically paragraphs selected from the literature of knowledge and the literature of power, the two categories* defined by De Quincey:

> The function of the first is to teach; the function of the second is to move: the first is a rudder; the second, an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the mere discursive understanding; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen to the higher understanding, or reason, but always through affections of pleasure and sympathy. Remotely it may travel towards an object seated in what Lord Bacon calls dry light; but proximately it does and must operate—else it ceases to be a literature of power—on and through that humid light which clothes itself in the mists and glittering iris of human passions, desires, and genial emotions. . . .
>
> What do you learn from *Paradise Lost?* Nothing at all. What do you learn from a cookery-book? Something new, something that you did not know before, in every paragraph. But would you therefore put the wretched cookery-book on a higher level of estimation than the divine poem? What you owe to Milton is not any knowledge, of which a million separate items are still but a million of advancing steps on the same earthly level; what you owe is power, that is, exercise and expansion to your own latent capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where every pulse and each separate influx is a step upwards, a step ascending as upon a Jacob's ladder from earth to mysterious altitudes above the earth. All the steps of knowledge, from first to last, carry you farther on the same plane, but could never raise you one foot above your ancient level of earth; whereas the very first step in power is a flight, is an ascending movement into another element where earth is forgotten.

The routine of the day's work demands that we read a considerable amount of the literature of knowledge—the newspaper, magazine articles, technical material peculiar to various fields of knowledge, textbooks, encyclopedias. If we can read such material competently, we experience a sense of adequacy and a consciousness of emotional sta-

* *Alexander Pope* by Thomas De Quincey. See also Letter III from De Quincey's *Letters to a Young Man.*

bility. The frustration incident to inability to read competently can be disturbing and disorganizing, especially if such failure affects the success of our work.

A wide experience in reading the literature of power, *belles lettres*, should be a part of everyone's reading. The study of paragraph structure should be extended to fiction, biography, orations, essays, history. Exploring the microcosm, the material in small compass, provides the approach to the macrocosm, the whole world of print.

In the following pages, paragraphs and short selections illustrate various patterns and approaches used by writers in different kinds of writing. The selections represent a limited number of patterns of writing, found frequently in the literature of knowledge and of power:

1. Question-answer
2. Repetition
3. Conclusion-proof
4. Opinion-reason
5. Problem-solution
6. Fusion of details: description
7. Contrast
8. Specific instances
9. Free association
10. Events in sequence
11. Systematic organization of related details

It is readily conceded that there is much over-lapping in the preceding classification of materials. Probably no author ever deliberately set out to compose paragraphs according to any precise formula; his thought dictates his form of expression. If any reader should challenge the choice of a selection as an illustration of a particular pattern, insisting that it could just as well illustrate another, there would be no rebuttal; the reader has a right to his opinion. The essential purpose of the chapter is to urge the reader to cultivate a sensitive awareness of the movement and direction and spirit of a paragraph and to be responsive to the author's line of movement. It is sympathetic, imaginative collaboration of the reader with the author that is at stake; if such a relationship does not exist, reading, in its true sense, does not take place. Patterns of composition, techniques for securing certain effects, the emotional atmosphere that invests a passage, give the reader clues as to how the author means that a passage should be read. Having read the passage, the reader exercises his independence to agree

or disagree with the author. Practice in establishing good author-reader relationship in reading paragraphs and short selections will enable the reader to cope with extended selections and compositions of book length.

QUESTION—ANSWER

In factual material, the pattern of paragraph organization frequently employed is the question-answer pattern. Sometimes the question is plainly stated and then answered. Sometimes the question is implied, but it can be easily inferred. If the student-reader holds himself firmly to a regime of:

> "What is the question that the author asks?
> "What answer does he give in this paragraph?"

he will grow in accuracy and preciseness of thinking and of expression. This type of paragraph occurs so frequently in material of an informational nature that the mastery of it is a necessity. Such practice disciplines the mind and eliminates vague thinking. It refuses to be content with an indefinite "What is the paragraph about?" and insists on a clean-cut condensation of the essential meaning of the paragraph. Such discipline makes the reader reject a rambling assortment of sentences, with ramifications and parentheses, masquerading as a paragraph.

The question-answer pattern of writing requires of the reader the question-answer technique of reading. The direct question forces the reader to be alert; it is a challenge to his attention and interest. He holds the question in the foreground of consciousness and reads the paragraph to find the answer. This procedure insures concentration and helps the reader to regulate his speed or rate of reading according to his grasp of the thought. In fact, one of the by-products of the analysis of question-answer paragraphs is the development of a rate of reading in its proper relation to comprehension.

The following paragraph* by Woodrow Wilson frames a question and answers it:

* From *The New Freedom* by Woodrow Wilson. Copyright, 1913, by Doubleday & Company, Inc.

The Nature of Freedom

What is liberty? You say of the locomotive that it runs free. What do you mean? You mean that its parts are so assembled and adjusted that friction is reduced to a minimum, and that it has perfect adjustment. We say of a boat skimming the water with light foot, "How free she runs," when we mean how perfectly she is adjusted to the force of the wind, how perfectly she obeys the great breath out of the heavens that fills her sails. Throw her head up into the wind and see how she will halt and stagger, how every sheet will shiver and her whole frame be shaken, how instantly she is "in irons," in the expressive phrase of the sea. She is free only when you let her fall off again and when she has recovered once more her nice adjustment to the forces she must obey and cannot defy. Human freedom consists in perfect adjustments of human interests and human activities and human energies.

Note the question.

Note that the author uses the technique of comparison in the build-up to the answer.

The comparisons have visual appeal.

Note the verbs that impart vitality to the comparison: skim, runs, obeys, fills, halt, stagger, shiver.

Note the contrast: she runs, she is in irons.

The last sentence gives the answer. It is a generalization that would be thin and unimpressive without the preceding vivid concrete details.

In the following paragraph,* the first phrase suggests the question: What is the criterion of growth? The rest of the paragraph defines growth.

Growth

The criterion of growth, for which we are in search, and which we failed to discover in the conquest of the external environment, either human or physical, lies rather in a progressive change of emphasis and shifting of the scene of action out of this field into another field, in which the action of challenge-and-response may

Note that the author first states what growth is not—not conquest of the external environment.

The answer is indicated.

* *A Study of History* by Arnold J. Toynbee; abridgement by D. C. Somervell. Copyright, 1946, by Oxford University Press, Inc., New York.

find an alternative arena. In this other field challenges do not impinge from outside but arise from within, and victorious responses do not take the form of surmounting external obstacles or of overcoming an external adversary, but manifest themselves in an inward self-articulation or self-determination. When we watch an individual human being or an individual society making successive responses to a succession of challenges, and when we ask ourselves whether this particular series is to be regarded as a manifestation of growth, we shall arrive at an answer to our question by observing whether, as the series proceeds, the action does or does not tend to shift from the first to the second of the two fields aforesaid.

The second sentence states again what growth is not.

The final sentence, long and periodic in structure, states what growth is. "Alternative arena" points to the answer: "inward self-articulation and self-determination."

The following paragraph* by Barrett Wendell gives a pointed answer to a pointed question: What are the fittest places in a paragraph for the chief ideas? Note that the answer is stated in the second sentence and repeated fully in the last sentence. The author illustrates his own theory.

PARAGRAPHS

How conspicuous the chief places in any paragraph are, a glance at any printed page will show. Trained or untrained, the human eye cannot help dwelling instinctively a little longer on the beginnings and the ends of paragraphs than on any other points in the discourse. Let any one of you take up a book or an article, hitherto strange, and try in a few minutes to get some notion of what it is about. Whoever has tried to do even very little reviewing for the newspapers; whoever has tried to collect authorities for a legal brief—knows the experience disagreeably well. First, you instinctively look at the beginning of the article or book, then at the end; then, turning over the pages, you skim them; in other words, you glance at the beginning and at the end of each paragraph, to see whether it is a thing you wish to read more

* From *English Composition* by Barrett Wendell. Copyright, 1894, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

carefully. And if the paragraphs in question be well massed, you are made aware of it by the fact that the process of intelligent skimming is mechanically easy; that you can, apparently by instinct, arrest your attention on those parts which serve your purpose. If, on the other hand, as is more frequently the case, the paragraphs in question be ill massed, you find difficulty in discovering what you want. All this is quite independent of sentence-structure, and of unity, and of coherence. It is a simple question of visible, external outline; and it means, in other words, that the beginning and the end of a paragraph are beyond doubt the fittest places for its chief ideas, and so for its chief words.

Ernest Dimnet, in the following paragraph,* states both the question and the answer briefly at the beginning. But the answer, "As you please," would satisfy no one. The author therefore states amply the implications of his nonchalant answer; finally toward the end, he gives the reader a sober, significant reply to the question.

Model for Reading

How should you read? As you please. If you please yourself by reading fast, read fast; if you read slowly and do not feel like reading faster, read slowly. Pascal does say that we are apt to read too fast or too slowly, but he blames only an excess. (Levity is foolish to read too fast, but seriousness will be a gainer in many cases if it reads briskly.) Montaigne complains of a formal way of reading. "My thoughts go to sleep when they are seated," he says, "so they and I walk." Honest industry merely jogs along, curiosity flies on Mercury's pinions. Passionate reading not only flies, it skips, but it does so only because it can choose, which is a high intellectual achievement. How do you read the time-table? You skip till you come to your place; then you are indifferent to the whole world and engrossed by your train, its departure,

The second sentence amplifies, "As you please."

Montaigne objects to formal reading.

Read passionately. Fly; skip.

Instances: how do you read the time-table, a map, a financial tip?

* Reprinted from *The Art of Thinking* by Ernest Dimnet. Copyright, 1928, by Simon and Schuster, Inc.

arrival, and connections. The same thing with a map which a motorist lends the anxious cyclist at the crossroads. The latter's whole soul is in his reading. The same thing with a financial tip in a letter which a friend is waiting for you to return. The same thing with any formula for the production of the philosopher's stone. Whatever we read from intense curiosity gives us the model of how we should always read. Plodding along page after page with an equal attention to each word results in attention to mere words. Attention to words never produces thought, but very promptly results in distractions, so that an honorable effort is brought to nought by its own ill-advised conscientiousness.

Answer: Read with your whole soul.

Expanded answer: "Whatever we read from intense curiosity gives us the model of how we should always read."

Contrast: it is not reading if attention is given to mere words.

REPETITION

If the thought is abstruse, the author insures the reader's understanding by stating the main idea more than once in different words. This procedure is common in philosophical writing, which is hard going for most readers even when they are impelled by their interest in the subject. The style is deliberate, even patient; the sentences are often long and elaborate in structure, for large ideas cannot be cabined, cribbed, and confined. Such writing suggests slow thoughtful reading, not the hop-skip-and-jump of the casual, superficial reader. How do you read the following passage* by Louis J. Halle, Jr.?

The Flight of Birds

The migratory passage of birds, like the movements of the stars, can be a great consolation to men whose minds continually search for an established order and progression in the universe. The knowledge that, whatever we may make of ourselves in the moment of our existence, the stars will continue in their ap-

First sentence contains the substance of the paragraph: key words: passage of birds, consolation, established order.

In the second sentence, security echoes established order and

* From *Birds Against Men* by Louis J. Halle, Jr. Copyright, 1938, by the Viking Press, Inc.

pointed courses, the seasons will move in their confirmed order, the birds will pursue their destined biannual migrations, carries with it a sense of ultimate security which the works of man alone fail to convey. It seems to give us the intimation of a will that directs us, it belies our orphaned estate in the universe. Order, harmony, regularity, those elements implicit in the recurrent flight of birds, are beyond the touch of the good and evil that men do in the numbered hours of their survival. Knowledge of the integrated pattern of the universe in which the birds share, of the final cosmic autocracy whose imposed limits no organism may transcend, secures us from the nightmare of anarchy.

is in turn echoed by "will that directs."

Note the contrast between "what we make of ourselves" and order in the universe.

Note the contrast: order, harmony, regularity—contrasted with the nightmare of anarchy.

The last sentence is a restatement of the thought of the paragraph, and comes to rest on "secures us from the nightmare of anarchy."

But the consolation we derive from knowledge of fate is not enough. We are not like the stars, dead clods in space with no will of our own. We cannot tolerate the degradation of tyranny. Within the limitations that give meaning to our existence we must have room for the exercise of our own volition, however pitiful it may appear before the universal will. For without that liberty living beings cease to live, men become cogs in a machine. The stars symbolize the tyranny of a brazen machine-universe; they are fixed in their orbits by inflexible rules, their movements are minutely predictable. But the flight of birds is, within its limits, capricious. The migrations, though they take place year after year, are never predictable. They are never twice the same. In the endless and conflicting variety of living individuals whose wills are sovereign within the confines of nature, the birds confirm free men in the exercise of their freedom. In that mirror of nature we recognize ourselves as independent individuals who can accept the order of the universe or combat it; in either case, though weakness make us help-

The second paragraph begins with "But," warning the reader of a contradiction which is stated repeatedly: too much security is tyranny; the birds and the stars have a different kind of freedom.

Note the use of contrast: tyranny and liberty; our own volition and the universal will; without liberty, cogs in a machine; minutely predictable, capricious; order and whimsy; fear and hope; highest heroism, abject degradation; accept and combat.

less, asserting our dignity as free individuals by naming our choice. The flight of birds epitomizes a dual world of tyranny and liberty, of order and whimsy, of fear and of hope, within which everything is possible for mankind from the highest heroism to the most abject degradation. Who would cavil, then, at being kept waiting for the inevitable? If punctuality is the courtesy of kings, only death, the greatest sovereign of them all, is invariably punctual.

In what respect are we independent individuals? Do we resemble the stars or the birds?

CONCLUSION—PROOF

Writers have found that an effective way to create in their readers a belief in the author's conclusion is to supply facts to buttress that conclusion. When the supporting structure consists of historical facts, scientific truths, reliable statistics, the reader's confidence is established; he is inclined to accept the conclusion because of the objective data. In the following selection* by James Blaikie, the central meaning is suggested in the first sentence but stated firmly later. The procedure is deductive.

The Ancient East Revealed

A hundred years ago all that was known, or supposed to be known, about the great empires of the Ancient East could have been printed in the thinnest of duodecimos; and even so, the bulk of it would have been either untrue, or so distorted as to be unrecognisable for truth. Today all that has been entirely changed. Round these ancient empires, a literature has already grown up which is almost comparable to that existing about Greece and Rome, and which is steadily growing in amount and value year by year. The actual historical outlines of the fortunes of the better known among them—

In the first sentence there is an indirect statement of the substance of the paragraph: a hundred years ago we did not know the Ancient East. But note the last sentence of the paragraph.

Here is an expansion of the last sentence of the paragraph.

Note the build-up, the preparation for the

* *The Life of the Ancient East* by James Blaikie. Published by The Macmillan Company, 1923.

Egypt, and the Mesopotamian kingdoms—are becoming more and more clearly defined; and while there are still great gaps in our knowledge, and much of the chronology is still uncertain, the general course of history in these nations can be, and has been traced with very considerable accuracy. The buried cities themselves have risen again from their dust. We can walk along the Procession Street of Babylon, and tread the great pavement-blocks of red breccia and white limestone over which Nebuchadnezzar's triumphal chariot rolled as he went up to give thanks to Marduk in the vast temple of E-sagila, under the shadow of the actual tower of Babel. We can go down into the tomb of Pharaoh, and see him lying there still, as he was laid in state three and a half millenniums ago, amid the clash of sistra, and the loud lament of the myriads of Thebes. We can read the letters which the king of Babylon wrote to the king of Egypt a hundred years before Moses was born, and can hear these mighty potentates wrangling over questions of tribute or bribe, like bagmen over an order, or horse-copers over a deal. Europeans of today have walked through halls where Sennacherib "gloried and drank deep," and have ransacked the library where Sardanapalus, the much-misunderstood, stored for himself the wisdom of all the ages that had gone before in Babylon and Assyria; and the worshippers of the God of Israel can tread the Holy of Holies where the prayers of the great Oppressor of Israel were offered. The very graves have given up their dead to show us, so far as the outward form can show it, what manner of men they were who fought and ruled and legislated before Greece or Rome had been dreamed of; and the code by which men's lives were ordered

main idea: the general course of the history in the nations of the Ancient East can be traced accurately.

The remainder of the paragraph supplies vivid, concrete evidence of our knowledge. The amplitude of details stimulates the imagination and furnishes a rich background against which the author's conclusion is silhouetted. Concrete details: streets, chariot, temple,

Pharaoh in his tomb, letters of kings.

Evidence: tribute, bribe, halls of Sennacherib, library, Holy of Holies, graves of the dead,

in Babylonia . . . and the love-songs of Egypt are the common possession of all who care to read them; and we can follow, in the very words in which they themselves gave utterance to it, the thought about God and the universe of men who died five thousand years ago. These are the accomplished facts.

codes, romances, love-songs.

The last sentence comes full circle, meeting the first sentence.

OPINION—REASON

Closely related to the conclusion-proof presentation of ideas is the opinion-reason pattern. The author's main idea may be his opinion, and instead of objective historical or mathematical data he may offer his reasons, that is, subjective support for his opinion. The effect on the reader is determined by the extent to which the reasons can be verified by his own experience; it is an intuitive judgment that he brings into play. He may feel the soundness of the author's thinking, or he may reject it as insincere and invalid. The acceptance or rejection is dependent, too, upon the moral and intellectual integrity of the author. The two following selections illustrate the opinion-reason structure.

HUMAN VALUES*

by Albert Schweitzer

Man today is in danger not only through his lack of freedom, of the power of mental concentration, and of the opportunity for all-round development: he is in danger of losing his humanity. As a matter of fact, the most utterly inhuman thoughts have been current among us for two generations past in all the ugly clearness of language and with the authority of logical principles. There has been created a social mentality which discourages humanity in individuals. The courtesy produced by natural feeling disappears, and in its place comes a behavior which shows entire indifference, even though it is decked out more or less thoroughly in a code of manners. The stand-offishness and want of sympathy which are shown so clearly in every way to strangers are no longer felt as being really rudeness, but pass for the

* From *The Philosophy of Civilization* by Albert Schweitzer. Copyright, 1932, by The Macmillan Company. Used by permission.

behavior of the man of the world. Our society has also ceased to allow to all men, as such, a human value and a human dignity; many sections of the human race have become merely raw material and property in human form. We have talked for decades with ever increasing light-mindedness about war and conquest, as if these were merely operations on a chessboard; how was this possible save as the result of a tone of mind which no longer pictured to itself the fate of individuals, but thought of them only as figures or objects belonging to the material world? When the War broke out the inhumanity within us had a free course. And what an amount of insulting stuff, some decently veiled, some openly coarse, about the colored races, has made its appearance during the last decades, and passed for truth and reason, in our colonial literature and our parliaments, and so become an element in general public opinion.

THE JUDGMENT OF OUR GRANDCHILDREN*
by Sir Richard Livingstone

Every age has a blind eye and sees nothing wrong in practices and institutions which its successors view with just horror. The eighteenth century complacently accepted the penal laws; we have only recently discovered the absurdity and injustice of leaving three-quarters of the population without any education after the age of fourteen. Perhaps our grandchildren, amazed at abuses and errors which we do not notice, may say of us: "How blind that generation was to its real problem—the human being! They boasted that science had unified the world. So indeed it had, with the result that German submarines could sink ships off the coasts of America, that wireless could carry propaganda to any country in any continent, and that men were looking forward to the day when aircraft could bomb New York from Europe and Europe from New York. They never saw that the only real unity is spiritual and that however great the advantage of being able to cross the Atlantic in eight hours, co-operation depends not on rapid transport, but on common ideals. They were conscious of the defects in their commercial and industrial system, but though their standards and values were far more

* From *Education for a World Adrift* by Sir Richard Livingstone. Preface XII-XIII. Published by the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1943.

chaotic, they did nothing to remedy the chaos. So their peacetime civilization was both impressive and depressing; the unlimited means at their disposal were largely misused. Their education did little to help them. It was like a half-assembled motor-car; most of the parts were there, but they were not put together. Reformers wished to base it on science and technology, or on sociology and economics, whose importance they saw; if they had had their way, they would have produced a good chassis, but overlooked the need of an engine—not to speak of a driver who knew where to go. The real problem lay deeper than science or sociology or politics; it was spiritual. They were dimly aware of it, but, in the English way, they averted their eyes from a difficult and embarrassing question; as some sufferers from cancer avoid consulting a doctor till it is too late. It is not surprising that in the end war tore their civilization to pieces." There would be some justice in such a comment.

PROBLEM—SOLUTION

The structure of the paragraph often follows the problem-solution design or pattern. The author presents a complication and then the resolution of the complication. It is as if he said: "Here is a difficulty. What do you think is the way out?" The structure demands reader participation to a marked degree; the situation is often dramatic, depending on the high seriousness of the factors involved. In the following paragraph,* a man's life is involved, and also the integrity of a king.

On Being One's Self

Problem: the relationship of father and son.

Shakespeare, who thought a great deal about the relations of fathers and children, makes this problem the subject of several of his best plays. He shows us a father who, with vast dexterity and energy, has won himself a great position. The father loves his son, and hopes that he will share the rewards and responsibilities of power. The son is talented and charming, brave and energetic. It would be easy, one would

What was the nature of the father?

* Reprinted from *The Art of Teaching* by Gilbert Highet by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., the publisher. Copyright, 1950, by Gilbert Highet.

think, and pleasant for him to join his father. There is no compulsion. He can do whatever he likes. He may sit at home playing shove-ha'penny if he chooses; or hunt all week during the season; or waste time harmlessly in other ways. But he chooses to become a gangster. He is only an amateur, but he is on the fringe of the professional crooks. His best friend is a broken-down old ruffian who has drunk almost all his gifts away and is living by the remainder of his wits. He sees far more of Falstaff than he does of his father, King Henry IV. He makes Falstaff into a sort of substitute father, laughing with him as he cannot with his father, tricking and befooling him as he would like to belittle his father. As the play goes on, it is harder and harder to understand what is wrong with Hal. Why should he throw away his chances? Why does he want to hurt his father? He says he is doing it so that he can get more praise for reforming later; but that is not the real reason, and it never comes up after his reform takes place. The real reason appears when his father is in genuine danger and when Hal himself is challenged by a rival of his own age. Then he rushes to help the king's cause, and kills his challenger, Hotspur. Immediately afterwards, when his father is gravely ill, Hal goes in to see him, finds him unconscious, and—as though he were already dead—picks up his crown and puts it on. That is what he could not do before. That is what he has always wanted. In default of that, he has done the extreme opposite. In order to be something, he has had to be something totally unlike his father: for he could not be his father while his father was still alive. The moment King Henry IV dies, Hal becomes king. He is a model king, strong, chivalrous, wise, energetic. And he rejects Falstaff, his substitute father, the false

What kind of son did he have?

The problem is defined exactly: what is it?

The reform takes place. What causes the reform?

Does the father solve the problem? do circumstances?

Is the solution true to the psychology of human nature?

staff he had used to prop him for a while, doing so with such coldness and cruelty that the old man dies of it. Now both Hal's fathers are dead, and he can be himself.

FUSION OF DETAILS

In the small compass of a single paragraph, the author may introduce a person to the reader. The impression on the reader will depend on how vividly the author can enumerate details and how active the reader's imagination is in assembling the details in a picture that he sees with the eye of the mind. Dickens was a genius in etching his characters with economy of line; he did not catalog characteristics; he created men and women, instinct with life. In the following paragraph,* Dickens shows us Mr. Snubbin in his native habitat:

MR. SNUBBIN

Mr. Serjeant Snubbin was a lantern-faced, sallow-complexioned man, of about five-and-forty, or—as the novels say—he might be fifty. He had the dull-looking boiled eye which is so often to be seen in the heads of people who have applied themselves during many years to a weary and laborious course of study; and which would have been sufficient, without the additional eye-glass which dangled from a broad black ribbon round his neck, to warn a stranger that he was very near-sighted. His hair was thin and weak, which was partly attributable to his having never devoted much time to its arrangement, and partly to his having worn for five-and-twenty years the forensic wig which hung on a block beside him. The marks of hair-powder on his coat collar, and the ill-washed and worse-tied white neckerchief round his throat, showed that he had not found leisure since he left the court to make any alteration in his dress; while the slovenly style of the remainder of his costume warranted the inference that his personal appearance would not have been very much improved if he had. Books of practice, heaps of papers, and open letters were scattered over the table, without any attempt at order or arrangement; the furniture of the room was old and

* *Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens.

rickety; the doors of the bookcase were rotting on their hinges; the dust flew out from the carpet in little clouds at every step; the blinds were yellow with age and dirt; and the state of everything in the room showed, with a clearness not to be mistaken, that Mr. Serjeant Snubbin was far too much occupied with his professional pursuits to take any great heed or regard of his personal comforts.

In the following selection,* the author's purpose is to enable the reader to see a place and experience to the fullest degree its atmosphere. Note the cumulative effect of piling detail on detail.

NOON IN THE PLAZA

by Frank Norris

It was high noon, and the rays of the sun, that hung poised directly overhead in an intolerable white glory, fell straight as plummets upon the roofs and streets of Guadalajara. The adobe walls and sparse brick sidewalks of the drowsing town radiated the heat in an oily, quivering shimmer. The leaves of the eucalyptus trees around the Plaza drooped motionless, limp and relaxed under the scorching, searching blaze. The shadows of these trees had shrunk to their smallest circumference, contracting close about the trunks. The shade had dwindled to the breadth of a mere line. The sun was everywhere. The heat exhaling from brick and plaster and metal met the heat that steadily descended blanketwise and smothering, from the pale, scorched sky. Only the lizards—they lived in chinks of the crumbling adobe and in interstices of the sidewalk—remained without, motionless, as if stuffed, their eyes closed to mere slits, basking, stupefied with heat. At long intervals the prolonged drone of an insect developed out of the silence, vibrated a moment in a soothing, somnolent, long note, then trailed slowly into the quiet again. Somewhere in the interior of one of the adobe houses a guitar snored and hummed sleepily. On the roof of the hotel a group of pigeons cooed incessantly with subdued, liquid murmurs, very plaintive; a cat, perfectly white, with a pink nose and thin, pink lips, dozed complacently on a fence rail, full in the sun. In a corner of the

* From *The Octopus* by Frank Norris. Copyright, 1901, by Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1928, 1939.

Plaza three hens wallowed in the baking hot dust, their wings fluttering, clucking comfortably.

And this was all. A Sunday repose prevailed over the whole moribund town, peaceful, profound. A certain pleasing numbness, a sense of grateful enervation exhaled from the scorching plaster. There was no movement, no sound of human business. The faint hum of the insect, the intermittent murmur of the guitar, the mellow complainings of the pigeons, the prolonged purr of the white cat, the contented clucking of the hens—all these noises mingled together to form a faint, drowsy bourdon, prolonged stupefying, suggestive of an infinite quiet, of a calm, complacent life, centuries old, lapsing gradually to its end under the gorgeous loneliness of a cloudless, pale blue sky and the steady fire of an interminable sun.

CONTRAST

Another sharply defined way of expressing thought is the technique of contrast. It challenges the reader's interest and imposes on him the necessity of following two parallel lines of thought that reinforce each other. There is a restless energy in the style of the following paragraph.* The sentences are short, with something of a staccato effect.

PRINCE HAMLET

You belong to all times and all countries. You have not aged an hour in three centuries. Your soul is as old as each of our souls. You live with us, Prince Hamlet, and you are what we are, a man in the midst of universal evil. They have cavilled at your words and your actions. They have shown you are inconsistent. How are we to comprehend this incomprehensible character, they said. He thinks alternately like a monk of the Middle Ages and like a scholar of the Renaissance. He has the mind of a philosopher, and yet is full of deviltries. He has a horror of lies but his life is one long lie. He is plainly irresolute, and yet certain critics have judged him full of resolution, without being entirely wrong. Finally, my Prince, they have represented you as a storehouse of thought, a mass of contradictions, and not a human being. But

* "Hamlet" from *La Vie Littéraire* by Anatole France. Première Série, Paris, Calman-Lévy, Editeurs.

that, on the contrary, is the token of your profound humanity. You are prompt and slow, bold and timid, kind and cruel; you believe and you doubt, you are wise, and above all you are mad. In a word, you live. Who of us does not resemble you in some way: Who of us thinks without contradiction, acts without inconsistency? Who of us is not mad? Who of us may not say to you with a mixture of pity, sympathy, admiration and horror: "Good night, sweet Prince!"

SPECIFIC INSTANCES

Often the writer makes an observation based on his experience, and follows it up with an illustration, or an instance, to provide a justification for his observation. He is not trying to convince the reader, or to teach him anything. It is an impersonal kind of writing, with the persuasive element reduced to the lowest terms. The persuasive element, in varying degrees, is always present in whatever an author writes and publishes. The following paragraph* by Toynbee conforms to the design of observation-justification, with little pressure on the reader, who is free to accept or reject the writer's offering. This type of paragraph structure has much in common with the opinion-reason pattern.

ETHEREALIZATION

If we arrange the outstanding characters of the great Shakespearian gallery in an ascending order of etherealization, and if we bear in mind that the playwright's technique is to reveal characters by displaying personalities in action, we shall observe that, as Shakespeare moves upward from the lower to the higher levels in our character-scale, he constantly shifts the field of action in which he makes the hero of each drama play his part, giving the Microcosm an ever larger share of the stage and pushing the Macrocosm ever farther into the background. We can verify this fact if we follow the series from Henry V through Macbeth to Hamlet. The relatively primitive character of Henry V is revealed almost entirely in his responses to challenges from the human environment around him: in his relations with his boon companions and with his father and in his communication of his

* *A Study of History* by Arnold J. Toynbee; abridgement by D. C. Somervell. Copyright, 1946. Oxford University Press, Inc., New York.

own high courage to his comrades-in-arms on the morning of Agincourt and in his impetuous wooing of Princess Kate. When we pass to Macbeth, we find the scene of action shifting; for Macbeth's relations with Malcolm or Macduff, or even with Lady Macbeth are equalled in importance by the hero's relations with himself. Finally when we come to Hamlet, we see him allowing the Macrocosm almost to fade away, until the hero's relations with his father's murderers, with his spent flame Ophelia and with his outgrown mentor Horatio become absorbed into the internal conflict which is working itself out in the hero's own soul. In Hamlet the field of action has been transferred from the Macrocosm to the Microcosm almost completely; and in this masterpiece of Shakespeare's art, as in Aeschylus's *Prometheus* or in Browning's dramatic monologues, a single actor virtually monopolizes the stage in order to leave the greater scope for action to the surging spiritual forces which this one personality holds within itself.

FREE ASSOCIATION: STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Another type of paragraph follows the pattern dictated by free association of ideas. It parallels closely what goes on in the writer's mind, in a stream-of-consciousness fashion. Such paragraphs are usually long, devoid of punctuation, as if it might impede the flow of ideas. This type of paragraph does not usually break up into conventional sentences of convenient length; it presents solid pages of print. The reader has no alternative but to leap in and keep swimming. With persistence he will emerge, and, it should be added in defence of the writer, he will probably be compensated for his effort. The following selection* is from *Intruder in the Dust* by William Faulkner.

LUCAS BEAUCHAMP

And he didn't know how it happened. The boy, one of Edmonds' tenant's sons, older and larger than Aleck Sander who in his turn was larger than he although they were the same age,

* From *Intruder in the Dust* by William Faulkner. Copyright, 1948, by Random House, Inc.

was waiting at the house with the dog—a true rabbit dog, some hound, a good deal of hound, maybe mostly hound, redbone and black-and-tan with maybe a little pointer somewhere once, a potlicker, a dog which it took but one glance to see had an affinity a rapport with rabbits—and Aleck Sander already had his tapstick —one of the heavy nuts which bolt railroad rails together, driven onto a short length of broom-handle—which Aleck Sander could throw whirling end over end at a running rabbit pretty near as accurately as he could shoot the shotgun—and Aleck Sander and Edmonds' boy with tapsticks and he with the gun they went down through the park and across a pasture to the creek where Edmonds' boy knew the footlog was and he didn't know how it happened, something a girl might have been expected and even excused for doing but nobody else, halfway over the footlog and not even thinking about it who had walked the top rail of a fence many a time twice that far when all of a sudden the known familiar sunny winter earth was upside down and flat on his face and still holding the gun he was rushing not away from the earth but away from the bright sky and he could remember still the thin bright tinkle of the breaking ice and how he didn't even feel the shock of the water but only of the air when he came up again. He had dropped the gun too so he had to dive, submerge again to find it, back out of the icy air into the water which as yet felt neither, neither cold or not and where even his sodden garments—boots and thick pants and sweater and hunting coat—didn't even feel heavy but just slow, and found the gun and tried again for bottom then thrashed one-handed to the bank and treading water and clinging to a willow-branch he reached the gun up until someone took it; Edmonds' boy obviously since at that moment Aleck Sander rammed down at him the end of a long pole, almost a log whose first pass struck his feet out from under him and sent his head under him and sent his head under again and almost broke his hold on the willow until a voice said: "Get the pole out of his way so he can get out"—just a voice, not because it couldn't be anybody else but either Aleck Sander or Edmonds' boy but because it didn't matter whose: climbing out now with both hands among the willows, the skim ice crinkling and tinkling against his chest, his clothes like soft cold lead which he didn't move in but seemed rather to mount into like a poncho or a tarpaulin: up

the bank until he saw two feet in gun boots which were neither Edmonds' boy's nor Aleck Sander's and then the legs, the overalls rising out of them and he climbed on and stood up and saw a Negro man with an axe on his shoulder, in a heavy sheep-lined coat and a broad pale felt hat such as his grandfather had used to wear, looking at him and that was when he saw Lucas Beauchamp for the first time that he remembered or rather for the first time that he didn't forget Lucas Beauchamp; gasping, shaking and only now feeling the shock of the cold water, he looked up at the face which was just watching him without pity, commiseration or anything else, not even surprise: just watching him, whose owner had made no effort whatever to help him up out of the creek, had in fact ordered Aleck Sander to desist with the pole which had been the one token toward help that anybody had made—a face which in his estimation might have been under fifty or even forty except for the hat and the eyes, but that was all even to a boy of twelve shaking with cold and still panting from shock and exertion because what looked out of it had no pigment at all, not even the white man's lack of it, not arrogant, not even scornful: just intractable and composed.

EVENTS IN TIME SEQUENCE

The appropriate technique is inherent in the thought; the author's ambition is to achieve an inevitable rightness in suiting form to thought. Incidents lend themselves to narrative treatment; that is, events should be recounted in a chronological sequence; often they lend themselves to a dramatic sweep to a climax. The following selection* illustrates the nature of the paragraph in narrative writing.

ALMAYER'S PONY

The cook hastened to shut the door of the galley, and a moment later a great scuffle began on deck. The pony kicked with extreme energy, the kalashes skipped out of the way, the serang issued many orders in a cracked voice. Suddenly the pony leaped upon the fore-hatch. His little hoofs thundered tremendously; he plunged and reared. He had tossed his mane and his

* From *A Personal Record* by Joseph Conrad. Published by permission of J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., London.

forelock into a state of amazing wildness, he dilated his nostrils, bits of foam flecked his broad little chest, his eyes blazed. He was something under eleven hands; he was fierce, terrible, angry, warlike; he said ha! ha! distinctly; he raged and thumped—and sixteen able-bodied kalashes stood round him like disconcerted nurses round a spoiled and passionate child. He whisked his tail incessantly; he arched his pretty neck; he was perfectly delightful; he was charmingly naughty. There was not an atom of vice in that performance; no savage baring of teeth and laying back of ears. On the contrary, he pricked them forward in a comically aggressive manner. He was totally unmoral and lovable; I would have liked to give him bread, sugar, carrots. But life is a stern thing and the sense of duty the only safe guide. So I steeled my heart, and from my elevated position on the bridge I ordered the men to fling themselves upon him in a body.

The elderly serang, emitting a strange inarticulate cry, gave the example. He was an excellent petty officer—very competent, indeed, and a moderate opium-smoker. The rest of them in one great rush smothered that pony. They hung on to his ears, to his mane, to his tail; they lay in piles across his back, seventeen in all. The carpenter, seizing the hook of the cargo-chain, flung himself on the top of them. A very satisfactory petty officer, too, but he stuttered. Have you ever heard a light-yellow, lean, sad, earnest Chinaman stutter in Pidgin-English? It's very weird, indeed. He made the eighteenth. I could not see the pony at all; but from the swaying and heaving of that heap of men I knew that there was something alive inside.

The cargo-chain was hooked to the broad canvas belt round the pony's body; the kalashes sprang off simultaneously in all directions, rolling over each other; and the worthy serang, making a dash behind the winch, turned the steam on.

"Steady!" I yelled, in great apprehension of seeing the animal snatched up to the very head of the derrick.

On the wharf Almayer shuffled his straw slippers uneasily. The rattle of the winch stopped, and in a tense, impressive silence that pony began to swing across the deck.

How limp he was! Directly he felt himself in the air he relaxed every muscle in a most wonderful manner. His four hoofs knocked together in a bunch, his head hung down, and his tail remained pendent in a nerveless and absolute immobility. He reminded

me vividly of the pathetic little sheep which hangs on the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece. I had no idea that anything in the shape of a horse could be so limp as that, either living or dead. His wild mane hung down lumpily, a mere mass of inanimate horsehair; his aggressive ears had collapsed, but as he went swaying slowly across the front of the bridge I noticed an astute gleam in his dreamy, half-closed eye. A trustworthy quartermaster, his glance anxious and his mouth on the broad grin, was easing over the derrick watchfully. I superintended, greatly interested.

"So! That will do."

The derrick-head stopped. The kalashes lined the rail. The rope of the halter hung perpendicular and motionless like a bell-pull in front of Almayer. Everything was very still. I suggested amicably that he should catch hold of the rope and mind what he was about. He extended a provokingly casual and superior hand.

"Look out, then! Lower away!"

Almayer gathered in the rope intelligently enough, but when the pony's hoofs touched the wharf he gave way all at once to a most foolish optimism. Without pausing, without thinking, almost without looking, he disengaged the hook suddenly from the sling, and the cargo-chain, after hitting the pony's quarters, swung back against the ship's side with a noisy, rattling slap. I suppose I must have blinked. I know I missed something, because the next thing I saw was Almayer lying flat on his back on the jetty. He was alone.

SYSTEMATIC ORGANIZATION OF RELATED DETAILS

A good deal of "literature of knowledge" seems to follow none of the patterns of paragraph development set forth in the preceding pages. Rather, it depends on a systematic arrangement of disparate facts, bringing together those that seem related in some way, perhaps by logical kinship of time or space or association. Such writing seems entirely unemotional, making a minimum appeal to the reader's imagination. It lacks flare and usually a style that invites or attracts. It seems to say to the reader: "Here are the facts. Take them or leave them." If the material serves the reader's purpose, he will

travel ninety-nine per cent of the way to appropriate the objective data.

It seems hardly fair to offer the following passage* as exemplifying the coldly intellectual, unemotional, unimaginative approach, for to a reader with a keen interest in the theatre, the article can be captivating. Certainly it seems to conform to none of the paragraph patterns just outlined. It was Somerset Maugham, I think, who referred to "plain pedestrian prose admirable for its straight-grained simplicity."

THEATRES
by Albert Neuberger

The ancient theatres were extremely large, some holding as many as 20,000 people. The acoustics of these buildings was therefore a matter of great importance. Not only did the builders endeavour to make a theatre a satisfactory resonance chamber as a whole, they also placed special bronze vessels, called echeia . . . in recesses; these were intended to magnify the sound. Moreover, the masks of the actors were shaped in such a way as to strengthen the sound. The point had been frequently raised how it was that these masks, which were after all a hindrance to the actors, continued in use for such a long time instead of being replaced by natural facial expression. If we consider the colossal size and the openness of the ancient theatres it is obvious that great demands were made on the human voice. No actor would have been able to shout through a leading part and sustain a tone which could be heard all over the theatre. It was soon discovered that the open mouth of the mask could easily be formed into a sort of speaking-tube. The mouths of all ancient stage-masks are shaped in a most peculiar fashion. Replicas of such masks were made for special acoustic experiments in which both actors and singers with voices of different pitches, that is, basses, sopranos, and others, participated. A number of spectators were also engaged in order that the action of these masks should be thoroughly tested in every direction. The very first experiments with masks revealed that to the hearers the intensity of the

* From *The Technical Arts and Sciences of the Ancients* by Albert Neuberger, translated by Henry L. Brose. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers, New York.

human voice appeared strikingly increased. Words spoken in a low voice without a mask were found to be unintelligible to the audience, but when a mask was applied the words were easily understood in all parts without the speaker's increasing his efforts. Further, the voice become more distinct. This result was considerably more marked in the case of tones of higher pitch. The tone was neither blurred nor did it acquire a nasal quality through the mask. The peculiar formation of its mouth caused the sound to be conveyed with increased intensity not only towards the front but also towards the sides of the auditorium. The actor at once felt in his voice a sensation of increased carrying power. He found the simple face-masks to be acoustically superior to the animal masks which covered the whole head and which caused a buzzing sensation. The results of these experiments all point to the conclusion that the actors of antiquity were well aware of the advantages gained by the use of the mask.

Reading is a co-partnership. What we receive from it is in the nature of dividends on a joint investment.

How to Read
by J. B. Kerfoot

CHAPTER IV

★

HOW TO READ SENTENCES

> The degeneracy of instruction in English grammar should not blind us to the fact that only through grammatical study can written words be understood. Grammar is the scientific analysis of language through which we understand the meaning and force of what is written.
>
> *The Higher Learning in America*
> by Robert Maynard Hutchins

READING and writing are complementary arts. The writer should know how to make his material readable, and the reader in turn should bring intelligence and understanding to bear on what the writer offers him. Both must be thoroughly acquainted with their medium, language, just as a musician understands the principles of harmony.

It has been popular in recent years to decry the study of grammar, with the result that the majority of students end their formal schooling without an understanding of the basic principles underlying sentence structure, products of an educational system in agreement with Dogberry who insisted that "to read and write comes by nature." Much time is spent in schools in various kinds of language exercises described as functional; they are designed to help students to read, write, and speak English competently and to listen to spoken English intelligently. Certainly, no one would decry "functionalism" in acquiring language skills, and no one advocates returning to the instruc-

tion procedures that stressed parsing the individual word and memorizing rules with little concern for their application. The pendulum has swung so far to the functional extreme that most students now lack a knowledge of grammatical principles on which language usage and composition are based. Any one who has tried in vain to explain English usage to a student who has no understanding of grammar usually concludes by saying, "Well, that's the way it is. Learn it." To practice acceptable English forms without an understanding of the principle illustrated is comparable to conducting an experiment in a science laboratory without relating it to the scientific law that is involved. Functionalism, practice, drill are all essential, but are more effective if they can be associated with the principles that are basic to effective communication.

The lack of knowledge of sentence structure accounts, in part, for failure to read competently. Perhaps the slogan, so popular in recent years, "Make everything fun," may account for the failure of schools to recognize that a working knowledge of syntax is indispensable, if one would speak, write, and read the English language competently. Perhaps teachers despair of making syntax as captivating as a Diesel engine; the difficulty, however, does not relieve teachers or students of their obvious obligations. And students do not balk at technical polysyllabic terms; they take them in their stride; then why not grammatical nomenclature? Young people like the challenge of hard work, if success is a reasonable expectation.

There is no evading the issue. The writer and the reader must accept the logical reasonableness of concord of subject and predicate, of the juxtaposition of the relative pronoun and its antecedent, and of the close relationship of adjectives and adverbs to the words whose meaning they modify or define. For the critical reader, a knowledge of English syntax furnishes the key to analysis.

English is a syntactical language; it has sloughed off most of its original inflections. It is by means of word-order and the juxtaposition of words that a writer conveys to the reader the logic of his thought and his feeling. If, therefore, the reader and the writer wish to establish a two-way traffic in communication the mastery of syntax is imperative. It is true that there are modern writers who do not conform to the conventional sentence pattern of subject + verb +

complement, but may use a single word or phrase or a dependent clause as if each were a sentence, with an initial capital letter and some mark of terminal punctuation. The critical reader should be able to cope with the conventional as well as the unconventional sentence pattern.

The following passage* by George Philip Krapp has special significance for readers bent on exploring the principles that control intelligent reading procedures:

WORD-ORDER

To take the place of the older method of binding the parts of the sentence together by means of concord in inflectional endings, Modern English, having lost almost all its inflectional endings, has been compelled to substitute instead the order of the words in the sentence. The principles determining the word-order of Modern English are two: first, that ideas shall be expressed in the order of their logical succession; and second, that related ideas shall stand in close proximity to each other. By the first principle English has settled upon an almost invariable succession of the main parts in the structure of the sentence. The main scheme of subject + verb + object is but little obscured by the insertion of modifying parts and is not departed from except in occasional interrogative and exclamatory sentences. In colloquial speech, where the sentences are naturally shorter and simpler than in the more conscious literary style, the simple subject + verb + object structure is almost the only one employed. It is, in fact, the only one that can be employed; for even in sentences in which the forms of the words indicate their cases, for example, *I saw him* and *Him saw I*, that rigid feeling for one set form which is generally characteristic of Modern English permits only the first, or natural, order of words.

The second principle requiring that related ideas shall be expressed in close proximity to each other is a necessary result of the importance of word-order and of the leading part which logic of situation plays in Modern English. If the interrelations of words in a group are to be determined by the logic of the ideas which they express, naturally those ideas which are closely related

* From *Modern English* by George Philip Krapp. Copyright, 1909, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

> must be brought close to each other in expression, since the logical connection would otherwise be obscured by the introduction of extraneous ideas. We thus demand that adjectives stand near their nouns, usually immediately before them; that pronouns stand near their antecedents; that adverbs stand close to their modified words; and that verbs stand as near as possible to the subjects which determine their number and person. In the ordering of phrases and clauses also, the parts must be arranged in the order of their logical sequence. Humorous illustrations (for example, "Piano to rent by a lady with solid mahogany legs") of the result of not heeding this rule abound in the grammars and rhetorics. But the fact that we find such departures from a fixed word-order ludicrous, even when the logic of the situation makes the meaning perfectly clear, as in the above example, shows what a strong hold mere proximity and order of words have acquired in Modern English speech.

In this discussion of reading, the sentence shall be regarded as a group of words having syntactical relationships and expressing a unit of thought—the academic conception of the sentence. The average English sentence of contemporary writing is approximately twenty-five words in length. Even if the reader's knowledge of grammar is vague, it is conceded that he can manage to get the meaning of a short sentence because he carries over to the printed page his experience with spoken English. But much that the serious reader would like to explore cannot be expressed in short sentences. Large ideas may require complicated sentence structure. The would-be critical reader has no alternative; he must be able to find his way through sentences that are long and often structurally complicated; else he will be lost in a maze of words, words, words. He must be able to recognize the structural elements composing a sentence and the relation of element to element; that is, syntax. Lacking such knowledge, he fails to grasp the organic unity of a long sentence and therefore fails to get the meaning of the sentence.

It is true that in the course of generations, the book-sentence has come to approximate the speech-sentence in structure and length, and the trend is a felicitous one. But readers will be deprived of desirable reading experiences, in both classical and contemporary material, if

syntactical relationships are a closed book to them. Writers like Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, William Faulkner, succeed in expressing their ideas in unconventional fashion, and provide the versatile reader with unpredictable challenges; the critical reader usually picks up the verbal gauntlet and proceeds to do battle with compensating rewards. Extensive experience in reading material of orthodox sentence structure should enable the reader to cope with the composition of those writers who deviate from the norm and create new patterns of expression.

The intelligent reader notes the subject and the predicate and associates them, not distracted by subordinate elements that may intervene between the subject and the predicate; he is not misled by inversions and ellipses. Sentences should be so constructed that what is most important to the writer should be obvious to the critical reader. By the use of conjunctions, one of the articulating agencies between structural parts, the writer indicates the logical relationship of thought-elements. The relation may be one of cause and effect, time, space, condition, concession, expressed by conjunctions that introduce subordinate elements: *if, though, when, where, while, although, unless, as, because, for,* indispensable to the discriminating writer in calling to the attention of the perspicuous reader what is subordinate in thought.

If all sentences are short and simple, with no attempt to indicate differences in importance, the reader tends to regard all ideas as of equal importance, with no perspective, like a child's drawing. The writer's skill helps the reader to see what is coordinate, what subordinate, what is parallel, what is balanced, what is loose. The reader avails himself of marks of punctuation, arbitrary signs that enable him to keep moving on the right track of the author's thinking, and to grasp meaning at the first reading.

The following passage* by Virginia Woolf consists of one long sentence; yet its meaning can be grasped easily by noting the syntactical relationships of the structural elements: participle *(considering)* followed by a series of noun clauses; then the impersonal pronoun *(it)* that points forward to a noun clause.

* From *The Moment and Other Essays,* by Virginia Woolf. Copyright by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., New York, 1948.

Illness Not a Literary Theme

Considering how common illness is, how tremendous the spiritual change that it brings, how astonishing, when the lights of health go down, the undiscovered countries that are then disclosed, what wastes and deserts of the soul a slight attack of influenza brings to view, what precipices and lawns sprinkled with bright flowers a little rise of temperature reveals, what ancient and obdurate oaks are uprooted in us by the act of sickness, how we go down into the pit of death and feel the waters of annihilation close above our heads and wake thinking to find ourselves in the presence of the angels and the harpers when we have a tooth out and come to the surface in the dentist's arm-chair and confuse his "Rinse the mouth—rinse the mouth" with the greeting of the Deity stooping from the floor of Heaven to welcome us—when we think of this, as we are so frequently forced to think of it, it becomes strange indeed that illness has not taken its place with love and battle and jealousy among the prime themes of literature.

Note the series of noun clauses introduced by how *and* what *used as object complements of the participle,* considering.

Finally, comes the summary of the clauses in this. *Note the main clause,* it becomes strange indeed.

It, *the impersonal pronoun, points forward to the noun clause,* that illness . . . literature, *an explanation of it. The sentence is periodic, with the main idea at the end.*

Without a knowledge of syntax, the reader could find his way through the following sentence* of one hundred words, but the passage illustrates pointedly how intricate sentence building can be, with a structural element dependent on another element and one or more elements in turn dependent on the first element, the whole sentence resembling the box-within-a-box toy of children, but possessing a compact unity. Mr. Churchill might have written: "In case of my death, I advise that Mr. Eden be entrusted with the formation of a new government," but the situation could be met adequately only by observing the amenities of letter-writing.

* *The Second World War*, by Winston S. Churchill. New York *Times*, Oct. 23, 1950.

A Letter

10 Downing Street, Whitehall.
June 16, 1942.

Sir:

In case of my death on this journey I am about to undertake, I avail myself of Your Majesty's gracious permission to advise that you should entrust the formation of a new Government to Mr. Anthony Eden, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who is in my mind the outstanding Minister in the largest political party in the House of Commons and in the National Government over which I have the honour to preside, and who I am sure will be found capable of conducting Your Majesty's affairs with the resolution, experience, and capacity which these grievous times require.

I have the honour to remain,
Your Majesty's faithful and
devoted servant and subject,
Winston S. Churchill.

In case . . . ; *prepositional phrase containing a prepositional phrase,* on this. . . . In case . . . undertake *modifies* avail.

I avail . . . advise: *the principal or independent clause of the sentence. The rest of the sentence is a noun clause, the object complement* of advise. *The noun clause contains two relative clauses* (who . . . preside *and* who . . . require, *both referring to Mr. Eden*) over which . . . preside: *relative clause, referring to Government.* which . . . require: *relative clause, referring to* resolution, experience, *and* capacity.

The grammatical blue print of the following sentence* by Will Durant is clearly defined.

Breathless before some medieval manuscripts, humble before Notre Dame, feeling the far vision of Winchester's nave, we forget the superstition and squalor, the petty wars and monstrous crimes, of the Age of Faith; we marvel again at the patience, taste, and devotion of our medieval ancestors; and we thank a million

Breathless, humble, feeling: *adjective modifiers of* we
We (1) forget what?
(2) marvel at what?
(3) thank whom for what?
This sentence can be regarded as a simple

* From *The Story of Civilization: The Age of Faith* by Will Durant. Copyright, 1950, by Will Durant. Published by Simon and Schuster, Inc.

forgotten men for redeeming the blood of history with the sacrament of art.

sentence with a compound predicate; or a compound sentence, consisting of three independent clauses.

The minds of both writer and reader come to a focus on the contrast. What is contrasted?

The reader should be aware of the grammatical skeleton of the preceding sentence as he reads it for the first time. Awareness of structure helps the reader to remember, because he grasps the thought in its organic unity. The sentence furnishes a fine example of balance: superstition, squalor, wars, crimes against patience, taste, and devotion of the Middle Ages; the blood of history and the sacrament of art.

Note in the following sentence,* that the conventional sentence formula stands out boldly like a silhouette; to miss *he bore insults* is to lose one's bearings in the maze of dependent elements attached to each of the essential elements of the sentence. The sentence formula is subject + verb + object complement.

> And yet he, who was generally the haughtiest and most irritable of mankind, who was but too prompt to resent anything which looked like a slight on the part of a purse-proud bookseller or of a noble and powerful patron, bore patiently from mendicants, who, but for his bounty, must have gone to the work house, insults more provoking than those for which he had knocked down Osborne and bidden defiance to Chesterfield.

The meaning of the sentence cannot be grasped completely until the end is reached. Note how the author introduces elements that point forward. The introduction of *more* continues the suspense to the very end of the sentence.

The following passage** by John Henry Newman furnishes another example of a succession of adverbial clauses of condition that build up to the main clause: "*it will not . . . study.*" The preliminary clauses of similar structure create a marked rhythm, and suggest to the

* *Samuel Johnson* by Thomas Babington Macaulay.
** From *The Idea of a University* by John Henry Newman.

reader the appropriate technique of reading, pointing his mind forward with a sense of expectancy.

The introductory conjunctions and the main clauses in the two following selections are underlined by the author to indicate Newman's and Maugham's sentence patterns.

LITERATURE

<u>If</u> then the power of speech is as great as any that can be named, <u>if</u> the origin of language is by many philosophers considered nothing short of divine, <u>if</u> by means of words the secrets of the heart are brought to light, pain of soul is relieved, hidden grief is carried off, sympathy conveyed, experience recorded, and wisdom perpetuated, <u>if</u> by great authors the many are drawn up into unity, national character is fixed, a people speaks, the past and the future, the East and the West are brought into communication with each other, <u>if</u> such men are, in a word, the spokesmen and prophets of the human family, <u>it will not answer to make light of Literature or to neglect its study</u>: rather we may be sure that, in proportion as we master it in whatever language, and imbibe its spirit, we shall ourselves become in our own measure the ministers of like benefits to others, be they many or few, be they in the obscurer or the more distinguished walks of life, who are united to us by social ties, and are within the sphere of our personal influence.

The following passage* furnishes another example of the periodic sentence that soars with a series of clauses introduced by *when*, but comes to rest with considerable emphasis on the main clause, "it is hard . . . novels."

<u>When</u> men in millions are living on the borderline of starvation, <u>when</u> freedom in great parts of the inhabited globe is dying or dead, <u>when</u> a terrible war has been succeeded by years during which happiness has been out of the reach of the great mass of the human race, <u>when</u> men are distraught because they can see no value in life and the hopes that had enabled them for so many centuries to support its misery, seem illusory; <u>it is hard</u>

* From *The Summing Up* by W. Somerset Maugham. Copyright, 1938, by W. Somerset Maugham. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday & Company.

> not to ask oneself whether it is anything but futility to write plays and stories and novels.

The loose sentence, as opposed to the periodic, provides many resting places before the end of the sentence is reached. There is obviously less tension in the rhetorically loose sentence. It gives the effect of piling detail on detail, evidence on evidence. In the following passage, the second sentence is loose in construction, but it has an agreeable momentum to which the reader responds. Consisting as it does of several elements loosely bound together, the loose sentence is not so compact grammatically and demands less rigid attention from the reader, as the following passage* from *French Traits* by W. C. Brownell illustrates:

> There is one instinct of human nature, one aspiration of the mind, which France has incarnated with unbroken continuity from the first—since there was a France at all France has embodied the social instinct. It was this instinct which finally triumphed over the barbaric Frankish personality; which during the panic and individualism of the Middle Ages took refuge in the only haven sympathetically disposed to harbor it and produced the finest monuments of Europe by the force of spiritual solidarity; which, so soon as the time was ripe, extended itself temporarily and created a civil organism that rescued the human spirit from servitude, and which, finally, in the great transformation of the Revolution, obtained the noblest victory over the forces of anarchy and unreason that history records.

In *Laughter in the Next Room,*** Sir Osbert Sitwell provides an example of the imperative necessity imposed on the reader to keep his bearings grammatically; else he will lose his direction. The outline is: "If . . . and although . . . at least I was privileged . . . to watch . . . to observe . . . and to have the good fortune to understand what I saw."

> If by birth mine was a dangerous inheritance, and although I possessed, as I did, most difficult parents, of whom to be the son,

* From *French Traits* by William C. Brownell. Copyright, 1897, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

** *Laughter in the Next Room* by Sir Osbert Sitwell. Copyright, 1948, by Little, Brown & Company and the Atlantic Monthly Press.

> alone, without attempting any other labor, would have constituted a profession in itself, at least I was privileged, at times plunged in great misery, at times flooded with the frustrated laughter of both high and low comedy, to watch a unique combination and interplay of forces, an unrivaled disruption of powers and dispersion of assets, and further, to observe at close—often, uncomfortably close—range, one of the most singular characters of his epoch and albeit myself born to these conditions, to have the good fortune to understand what I saw.

Absalom, Absalom! by William Faulkner* furnishes an example of the kind of sentence the reader finds in novels of the stream-of-consciousness school. Such writing demands concentration and persistence on the part of even very critical readers. As to structure the sentence consists of noun clauses introduced by the conjunction *that*, in apposition with *reasons*. Note the organization: "that I stayed for food; that I stayed for shelter; or that I stayed for company." Each clause is complex in structure, with clause within clause. But the structure of the sentence is appropriate to the thought and suggests the mood of the speaker and her frustrated effort to understand herself. Short sentences, brisk and compact, would not have expressed the meaning of the speaker. The critical reader plunges into such a sentence and avails himself of whatever footholds the structure of the sentence affords. According to Mr. Charles Poore, critic and reviewer: "You have to plunge into the long, slow breakers of Faulkner's writing and swim for it."

> Now you will ask me why I stayed there. I could say, I do not know, could give ten thousand paltry reasons, all untrue, and be believed—that I stayed for food, who could have combed ditchbanks and weed-beds, made and worked a garden as well at my own home in town as here, not to speak of neighbors, friends whose alms I might have accepted, since necessity has a way of obliterating from our conduct various delicate scruples regarding honor and pride; that I stayed for shelter, who had a roof of my own in fee simple now indeed; or that I stayed for company, who at home could have had the company of neighbors who were at least of my own kind, who had known me all my life and even

* From *Absalom, Absalom!* by William Faulkner. Published by Random House, Inc. Copyright, 1936, by William Faulkner.

> longer in the sense that they thought not only as I thought but as my forebears thought, while here I had for company one woman whom, for all she was blood kin to me, I did not understand and, if what my observation warranted me to believe was true, I did not wish to understand, and another who was so foreign to me and to all that I was that we might have been not only of different races (which we were), not only of different sexes (which we were not), but of different species, speaking no language which the other understood, the very simple words with which we were forced to adjust our days to one another being even less inferential of thought or intention than the sounds which a beast and a bird might make to each other. But I don't say any of these. I stayed there and waited for Thomas Sutpen to come home. Yes.

The following passage* from the works of Gertrude Stein illustrates the stream-of-consciousness type of sentence structure.

> The next day was a different thing everything was happening and nothing was as strange as it had been, we could see it and we were looking but it would never be again what yesterday had been.
>
> Lecturing was to begin. Carl Van Vechten had arranged that I was to give one a little privately so as to get used to everything. Thank him.
>
> And then Potter of the university extension of Columbia came to see me and he was a nice man. He had been the first person to ask me to lecture, and this was the university extension of Columbia. We had had a pleasant correspondence and there were to be four lectures and he had described the audience as being a few hundred and after the private lecture this was to be my first one.
>
> He said he was pleased that everybody now that everybody had been so excited at my coming everybody was coming to hear me lecture and that there would be many over a thousand in the audience. I lost everything, I was excited and I said

* From *Your United States* by Gertrude Stein, reprinted from *The Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1937, by permission of Carl Van Vechten, Miss Stein's literary executor, and Donald Gallup, curator of the Collection of American Literature, Yale University Library.

but in that case I would not come. What do you mean, he said, well, I said, I have written these lectures they are hard lectures to read and it will be hard to listen to them, anybody not used to lecturing cannot hold the attention of more than a roomful of that I was certain and I certainly was not going to read a difficult lecture to more than a thousand of them, you said that there would be no more than five hundred and if there are more than that I will not come. But what can I do, said Potter. I do not know anything about that, I said, but if there are more than five hundred there I will not come. Does she mean it, said he perplexedly to Alice Toklas. If she says so, said Alice Toklas, she probably will not come. What can I do, said Potter, I do not know, I said, but I am definitely not going to read a difficult lecture to more than five hundred people, it cannot be done, I said. Well, he said and he was a nice man and he left. Of course I was awfully upset I was to speak the next evening before two hundred and that was bad enough. Carl Van Vechten had arranged all that but here was all this trouble and then I was not accustomed to heated apartments, we heat very sparingly in Paris and besides Paris is moist, the food is dry and the air is moist and in New York the food was moist and the air was dry, so gradually I was certain that there was something the matter with my throat and I would not be able to speak anywhere. Anyway before we went to bed Potter telegraphed, everything arranged I have done the impossible sleep peacefully. And that was over. Nothing is immediately over with me but that was over.

Carl Van Vechten said that they had asked him to introduce me for the first lecture and he did not think I would care to be introduced and I said I would not. And I could refuse him because that would be alright and if I refused him then I could never of course accept any one. Beside it was silly everybody knew who I was if not why did they come and why should I sit and get nervous while somebody else was talking. So it was decided from then on that there would be no introduction nobody on the platform a table for me to lean on and five hundred to listen.

But my throat was not any better and so we telephoned to the nice doctor we had met on the *Champlain* and he came and he said there was nothing the matter, of course there was nothing the matter and he gave me something and it was a comfort

> and I was almost ready to begin lecturing. Many people say you go on being afraid when you are alone on the platform but after the first one I never was again. Not at all.

The reader must employ his ingenuity to find the pattern and therefore the logic in the following passage* from *Portraits and Prayers* by Gertrude Stein, describing Matisse, the painter.

> One was quite certain that for a long part of his being one being living he had been trying to be certain that he was wrong in doing what he was doing and then when he could not come to be certain that he had been wrong in doing what he had been doing, when he had completely convinced himself that he would not come to be certain that he had completely convinced himself that he would not come to be certain that he had been wrong in doing what he had been doing he was really certain then that he was a great one and he certainly was a great one.

The reader of the preceding passage can sympathize with bewildered Alice *(Through the Looking Glass)* when she had occasion to remark: "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't know exactly what they are."

The use of participles, gerunds, absolute noun constructions, appositional phrases are difficult for the average reader, for in his opinion they tend to slow up the tempo of the passage. Psychologically, they obstruct the reader's coming into the "oral presence of the writer." The writer will bear in mind the nature of his constituency if he wants to be read, but he has the right to expect that critical readers will not find participles and gerunds impossible barriers; such constructions may be essential to nice shadings of meaning. Nothing stated here should be construed as a plea for popularization or a lowering of standards. THE ART OF BOOK READING is not a plea for appeasement of the reader.

The tendency today is not to overload a sentence but to write many sentences to express even a single thought. It is well to remember that it may be confusing to the reader to have many fragments with

* *Portraits and Prayers* by Gertrude Stein, Random House, New York. Copyright 1934, by the Modern Library, Inc.

no indication of relationship. Can the point of diminishing returns be reached? May not a sentence be too long? May not what passes for a sentence be too short?

The writer must carry the reader forward, not requiring him to leap impossible gaps; the reader must feel the momentum of the progressive thought development; else his inertia may make him bog down and he may not arrive where the author would like to take him.

The reader of poetry is especially dependent on keeping his bearings, grammatically speaking. The inverted order of words, the condensations, the ellipses, make a knowledge of grammatical structure imperative, if the critical reader comprehends the core of meaning which is the heart of most poetry.

The openings lines of *Paradise Lost* consist of four lines of prepositional phrases and their clause modifiers before the verb, the essential part of the sentence, is reached: "Sing, Heavenly Muse." The conventional order is reversed.

> Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
> Sing, Heavenly Muse.

Note in the following familiar lines from Whittier's *Snow-Bound* how dependent the reader is on his ability to see syntactical relations. He must connect the subject, a *chill*, with its predicate, *told*, and in turn connect *told* with its direct object, *the coming of the snow-storm*. Note, too, the inversion in the last line.

> A chill, no coat, however stout,
> Of homespun stuff could quite shut out,
> A hard, dull bitterness of cold,
> That checked, mid-vein, the circling race
> Of life-blood in the sharpened face,
> The coming of the snow-storm told.

The reader is expected to note at the first reading of the following

lines that the subject, *art,* is defined by four infinitive phrases, *to come, to hide, to give,* and [to] *wring,* and is predicated by *is—to die.*

> The only art her guilt to cover,
> To hide her shame from ev'ry eye,
> To give repentance to her lover,
> And wring his bosom is—to die.
>
> Oliver Goldsmith

The following lines require the reader to note that Say *not* is followed by a series of noun clauses introduced by the conjunction, *that* understood; the meaning of the sentence is flatly contradicted unless the reader sees that the whole stanza is dependent on Say *not.*

> Say not the struggle naught availeth,
> The labour and the wounds are vain,
> The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
> And as things have been they remain.
>
> Arthur Hugh Clough

Readers are grateful to Herbert Spencer for his plea in their behalf, but the obligation of the critical reader cannot be ignored. An alert mind and an active imagination can go far in reducing friction and inertia.

IN BEHALF OF THE READER*

Regarding language as an apparatus of symbols for the conveyance of thought, we may say that, as in a mechanical apparatus, the more simple and the better arranged its parts, the greater will be the effect produced. In either case, whatever force is absorbed by the machine is deducted from the result. A reader or listener has at each moment but a limited amount of mental power available. To recognize and interpret the symbols presented to him requires part of this power; to arrange and combine the images suggested requires a further part; and only that part which remains can be used for realizing the thought conveyed. Hence, the more time and attention it takes to receive and understand each sentence, the less time and attention can be given to the contained idea; and the less vividly will that idea be conceived.

* *The Philosophy of Style* by Herbert Spencer.

There seems reason to think that in all cases the friction and inertia of the vehicle (language) deduct from its efficiency; and that in composition, the chief, if not the sole thing to be done, is to reduce this friction and inertia to the smallest possible amount.

CHAPTER V

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THE NECESSITY OF AN EXPANDING READING VOCABULARY

> Under everything that a sentient man with a soul fully awakened perceives and comprehends, the word persists; the word, spoken or unspoken, frames every feeling and, like the trumpet of a herald set on a tower, sounds to announce every new discovery, every conquest of fresh territory, and every new thought, wrenched or reclaimed from the universal matrix, chaos.
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> *Laughter in the Next Room*
> by Sir Osbert Sitwell

ONE mark of the critical reader is his absorbing interest in words, their connotations and associations. No one has ground for being smugly content with his store of words. The unabridged dictionaries contain approximately six hundred thousand words; it is estimated that Shakespeare used approximately fifteen thousand, and that the average speaker has a vocabulary of about three thousand words. It is conceded that an intelligent person equipped with a meager word capital may conduct his business and social activities with a measure of success. But note the testimony of Dr. Johnson O'Connor:

> An exact and extensive vocabulary is an important concomitant of success. So much is known. It increases as long as an individual remains in school and college, but without conscious effort does

> not change materially thereafter. A consciously, even laboriously, achieved vocabulary is an active asset.*

Mr. Ogden and Mr. Richards regard the exact and sincere use of language as an ethical obligation which cannot be discharged if we merely "vibrate with verbal reverberations."

> A loose and insincere use of language leads not only to intellectual confusion but to the shirking of vital issues or the acceptance of spurious *formulae*. Words were never a more common means than they are today of concealing ignorance and persuading even ourselves that we possess opinions when we are merely vibrating with verbal reverberations.**

The size and range of one's reading vocabulary are significant factors in determining the extent and quality of one's reading. Psychologists regard a vocabulary test as an indispensable part of an intelligence test, insisting that there is a high correlation between vocabulary and intelligence. But it is encouraging to note that readers have unrealized potentialities, and the purpose of the study of reading techniques which includes vocabulary study is to help in bridging the gap between potentiality and reality.

The nature of one's vocabulary is a reliable index of the kind and extent of one's life experiences, for words are symbols of experiences. Writers use words in sentences and paragraphs to evoke experiences in the reader, but the symbol is impotent if the reader lacks the experience, actual or vicarious, for which the word-symbol stands. Language to be understood must have a base in experiences in common. Emotional frustration often occurs when words cannot bridge the gap between different experiential worlds; in that case, there is basis for misunderstanding at the psychological level. Beyond all symbols, whether verbal or mathematical, lie realities. To be guilty of verbalism is to play glibly on the surface of words, without a base in reality. What can be evoked by words makes the difference in readers.

Each person has his own world of perceptions, feelings, and ideas,

* *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1934, from "Vocabulary and Success" by Johnson O'Connor.

** "The Meaning of Meaning" by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards. Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York. Routledge and Keegan Paul Ltd., London.

but he is walled in by language. A recent review* in the New York *Times* by Mr. Gilbert Highet, in writing of *The Wrath of Achilles* by I. A. Richards, notes the isolation of a person who cannot understand a foreign language, and the misunderstanding that may arise even among those who speak the same language. Lack of understanding by the reader may result in his merely rearranging his prejudices.

> Mankind is separated by scores of old walls, invisible and immovable. Gestures can be seen through these walls, and voices can be heard. Yet thoughts can scarcely penetrate them; and it is only through thought that men can ever be united.
>
> These walls are languages. The boundaries of law and custom vary. Flags can be altered. But the most powerful differences between human beings are those which come from their inability to understand one another's thoughts. To hear another language spoken without comprehending it is rather like suddenly going deaf and dumb. The Frenchman in Holland hears people making noises, but the noises are meaningless, and so (except to himself) are the noises he makes when he speaks. The reader who picks up a book in an unintelligible language has become illiterate. He feels humiliated. He is like a child.

It is the reasonable obligation of every reader who has the ambition to re-create the printed page to make persistent, systematic effort to improve the range and the quality of his reading, writing, listening, speaking, thinking vocabularies. Of all the vocabularies, the reading vocabulary is the most extensive, for the context usually aids in illuminating the meaning of individual words; besides, the reader sets his own pace in reading, taking time for reflection and for regressions if necessary. While one's vocabulary may fall into five categories, whatever is done to improve one kind of vocabulary has a favorable effect on the others.

It is not chiefly by memorizing the definitions of lists of words, "looked up" in a dictionary, that the reader improves the extent and quality of his vocabularies, though dictionary study undoubtedly has its place in the total effort to become a more efficient reader. The dictionary states what a word denotes. Such definitions are colorless

* Reprinted by permission of the New York *Times Book Review*, Nov. 19, 1950, and Gilbert Highet, Anthon Professor of Latin, Columbia University.

when compared with the meaning of words framed in a phrase; the juxtaposition of other words imparts a vitality that the isolated word does not possess. Used in various phrase settings, words are chameleon, kaleidoscopic. Note the testimony* of Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes as to the content of a word:

> A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged; it is the skin of a living thought and may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and the time in which it is used.

Most adult readers dislike to interrupt their reading to refer to a dictionary, and rarely do so unless they are blocked in their efforts to get meaning from the printed page. There is a place for intelligent guessing as to the meaning of words, or shall we call it inferring meaning from the context? The recommended procedure is to read without interruption, if possible, and then pursue unfamiliar words in the dictionary, studying them until they become permanent additions to one's vocabularies. If you will refer to pages 79-81, you will note how even one sentence can illuminate a word, but much more can a whole paragraph or a long article throw light on the total meaning of a word.

Language is usually regarded as only a medium of communication, but it is an instrument of thought as well. According to Roget,** we could not even think and reason without language:

> The use of language is not confined to its being the medium through which we communicate our ideas to one another; it fulfills a no less important function as an instrument of thought; not being merely its vehicle, but giving it wings for flight. Metaphysicians are agreed that scarcely any of our intellectual operations could be carried on to any considerable extent without the agency of words. None but those who are conversant with the philosophy of mental phenomena can be aware of the immense influence that is exercised by language in promoting the development of our ideas, in fixing them in the mind, and in detaining them for steady contemplation. Into every process of reasoning,

* From the first *Stock Dividend* case. Towne v. Eisner, 245 U. S. 418, 425 (1918).

** From Roget's *Synonyms and Antonyms*, edited by C. O. S. Mawson. Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1911.

> language enters as an essential element. Words are the instruments by which we form all our abstractions, by which we fashion and embody our ideas, and by which we are enabled to glide along a series of premises and conclusions with a rapidity so great as to leave in memory no trace of the successive steps of the process; and we remain unconscious how much we owe to this potent auxiliary of the reasoning faculty. It is on this ground, also, that the present work founds a claim to utility. The review of a catalogue of words of analogous signification will often suggest by association other trains of thought, which, presenting the subject under new and varied aspects, will greatly expand the sphere of our mental vision. Amidst the many objects thus brought within the range of our contemplation, some striking similitude or appropriate image, some excursive flight or brilliant conception, may flash on the mind, giving point and force to our arguments, awakening a responsive chord in the imagination or sensibility of the reader and procuring for our reasonings a more ready access both to his understanding and to his heart.

The reader is distrustful of a poverty-stricken vocabulary. If the writer's use of words is repetitious or pedantic or stilted or awkward, or meager, the reader's distrust is justified, for poverty of language usually betrays poverty of thought. Fine shades of meaning can be expressed only when the writer is free to range over a large vocabulary for the inevitably right word. *Rapport* of reader and writer is possible only when they have a medium of communication.

The serious reader expects the writer to use words with precision, a characteristic that has considerable force if the root of the word *precision* is recalled, meaning to *cut*, to *kill*. Precision implies ruthlessly lopping off what is unessential; but precision is more. It is hewing to the line so closely that the thought emerges sharply distinct, with no blurs or excrescences. Precision is closely related to concreteness of expression, the antithesis of woolly abstractions that may at times sink into jargon, and even lower into jabberwocky or gobbledegook. Reader interest can rarely survive vague, unprecise writing. On the other hand, note how language comes alive in the following passage* from *Noble Essences* by Sir Osbert Sitwell:

* From *Noble Essences* by Sir Osbert Sitwell. Copyright, 1950, by Sir Osbert Sitwell. Published by Little, Brown & Company and the Atlantic Monthly Press.

> The younger woman—if that differentiative term can be applied in such a connection—was outwardly dutiful, soft, docile, easily shocked, and excessively stupid, though she possessed a certain hard core of spite into which she could withdraw at times and become for those moments less obtuse. In appearance she was a dumpy, tweed-clad, cotton-spool figure, with a round face carrying a look of Alpine simplicity, deepening at moments into cretinism, under a round hat, turned up, and revealing a skull of brachycephalic type, thinly covered with hair.

There are occasions when the writer must express himself in generalizations and abstractions, but if he is wise he will supplement the generalization with concrete instances, guiding the reader's thinking, not depending entirely on him to interpret the generalization. The wise writer will use, when the thought permits, the active voice instead of the passive, the concrete noun rather than the abstract; he will avoid circumlocutions and whatever type of expression that seems sham. The reader resents jargon; it seems to him insincere. It is particularly irritating, for it seems to have meaning, yet often lacks it. The safe advice to give the writer, in behalf of the reader, is: Talk in terms of specifics to your reader or listener. Perfection of "specifics" is achieved in the parables by which Christ talked to the multitudes; "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's"; "A sower went forth to sow."

Of course, a writer can exemplify the law of diminishing returns if he emulates the example of Flaubert who, according to Virginia Woolf, spent a month seeking a phrase to describe a cabbage. Nor is it advisable to forfeit a prize while searching for the word, *hantle*, as did the Scotch boy of Barrie's story.

There are some ideas and emotions that basic English cannot convey; especially does the basic vocabulary fail in imparting dignity and majesty and rhythm to poetry and prose, but it is unfair to criticize basic English for lacking a quality that it cannot by its very nature possess; it would fail of its avowed purpose if it offered all that the most liberal vocabulary includes. Shakespeare had an intuitive perception for the inevitably right word and knew that at times only the organ notes of classic polysyllables would do justice to the sweep of his ideas:

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.*

Another phase of word-use that endears the writer to the reader is the quality of anticipation: that is, the use of words that help the reader to anticipate not only the thought but the feeling as well; for example, note the use of *fruitful* and *barren* in the following lines from *Antony and Cleopatra:*

Ram thou thy fruitful tidings in my ears
That long time have been barren.

Katherine Mansfield wrote in her *Journal:* "The adjectives seem part of the nouns when Shakespeare uses them. *Fruitful* expects *barren.*"** *Barren* echoes *fruitful.*

The critical reader is fortunate if he has studied the Greek and Latin languages, for they have made signal contributions to the compositeness of the English language. Even a superficial acquaintance with Latin and Greek is useful. A knowledge of prefixes and suffixes as well as certain roots that lend themselves to many permutations and combinations can be acquired by independent study.†

An awareness of the etymology of a word often enables the writer to use it in its original sense and thus impart a subtle meaning that has been lost in the ordinary use of the word. Witness the use of *express* in the following poem by Emily Dickinson:

Essential oils are wrung;
The attar from the rose
Is not expressed by suns alone,
It is the gift of screws.

It is the word *expressed* in its etymological sense that provides the reader with a flashing moment and illuminates the poem. An etymological awareness is a valuable asset for both reader and writer, especially an acquaintance with the Latin ancestors of English words.

* Macbeth: Act II, scene 2.

** *Journal of Katherine Mansfield.* Copyright, 1927, Alfred A. Knopf.

† *Latin and Greek in Current Use* by Eli E. Burriss and Lionel Casson, published by Prentice-Hall, Inc., is recommended.

The following passage* by Zechariah Chafee, Jr., testifies to the emotive function of words, in addition to the communicative function. The writer wants his reader to do something or to feel in a particular way about something. Even material that is informative imparts to the words in which it is expressed something of the emotive quality. The sheer gesture of writing implies desire on the part of the writer to evoke reader-response to his words.

> Words are the principal tools of lawyers and judges, whether we like it or not. They are to us what the scalpel and insulin are to the doctor, or a theodolite and sliderule to the civil engineer. So we need to know more about their imperfections. Several books have appeared recently about a new science of language called Semantics. Best known to the United States are "The Meaning of Meaning" (fourth edition, 1936), a technical and difficult work by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, and "The Tyranny of Words" (1938), a popular discussion by Stuart Chase.
>
> Language is not used solely for the communication of thought. That purpose is uppermost in our minds when we write opinions or briefs or law review articles, and hence we lawyers easily forget that words are frequently employed with quite a different object—to make somebody do something. Ogden and Richards stress this emotive function of language as distinguished from its communicative function; and illustrate this by printing Malinowski's observations on the speech of children and savages.** They do not employ language, he says, as a condensed piece of reflection and a record of fact or thought, as does the author of a book or inscription. With them, language functions as a link in concerted human activity, as a piece of human behavior. It is a mode of action and not an instrument of reflection.
>
> What bearing has this emotive function on law? More than we like to admit. The clerk's prelude to the session of court—"Oyez! oyez! oyez!"—aims to produce an attitude of seriousness and wrench us out of the careless moods of everyday life. The lawyer's address to a jury is only in part an attempt to organize the evidence clearly. In large measure, he seeks to evoke emotion and action, namely, a favorable verdict. Nor can we say that the

* This article was published in Vol. 41, *Columbia Law Review* at page 381.

** Malinowski, supplement to Ogden and Richards, *Meaning of Meaning* (fourth edition, 1936) 309-21 passim.

emotive function is always absent from the lawyer's argument before an appellate court.

When one gets into this vein, he discovers the emotive function operating in almost all speech and writing. The communication of facts and thoughts seems never completely separated from the desire to make somebody do something or feel somehow. Nothing appears sterilized from emotion except a quitclaim release. Even when the informative purpose is very strong as in a law-book, the author wants to write so that a publisher will print it and lawyers will buy it.

Probably the distinction between the communicative and emotive functions is only a matter of degree. The transmission of information and the creation of an attitude in the listener are dual purposes in most speech, though in varying proportions. Because we believe reason to be our best guide, we must exert ourselves in legal expression to make our thoughts fit things and our words fit our thoughts, to keep down the emotional element, and above all to pick and choose among possible emotions. The evocation of a sense of fairness may be within the emotive function as truly as the stimulation of hatred and greed, but it is a much more legitimate aim.

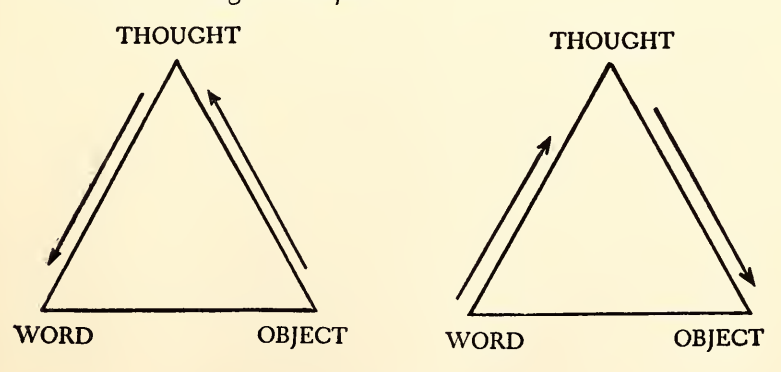
However, our major concern as lawyers is with the communicative function of language, to which my remaining observations will be devoted. My next point is that *The Meaning of Meaning* gives us much help in understanding the true relation between a word and the object for which the word stands. (I use "object" loosely to embrace persons and abstract ideas as well as tangible things; the semanticists use instead the technical word "referent.")

Although this identification of the word with the object is avoided by more sophisticated minds they often slip just one peg down into the deeply-rooted notion that the word inevitably and unalterably belongs to a particular thing or person. A name is like a label chained around the object by God's order, which nobody must presume to detach. "And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof."

Lawyers and judges are highly susceptible to this notion of an indissoluble link between the word and the thing. A sense of the inherent potency of words is natural with us. Words are the effective force in the legal world. In statutes, they result in heavy

fines, long imprisonment, or even death. In contracts, deeds, or wills, they transfer large amounts of property. Hence the persistent feeling in our profession that the right words must be used.

The need for analysis of the word "meaning" is obvious. Ogden and Richards constantly insist that words are only symbols of objects. These symbols do not arise from the nature of the objects, but are created by human beings for purposes of convenience, just like buoys and traffic-signals. So far there is nothing new. But now comes a big contribution from Ogden and Richards. The relation of the word to the object is only indirect. Between these two factors, a third factor always intervenes, the thought of some person. Thus the object causes a thought in the mind of a speaker or writer, and he uses a word to express his thought. In listening or reading, the process is reversed. The word brings about a thought which refers to the object. The authors diagram their theory by a triangle. The word and the object are at the two base angles; the thought is at the apex. We never go directly across the base of the triangle, from word to object or vice versa, but always travel the long way around through somebody's thought at the top of the triangle. Of course, we telescope this process in popular parlance by saying that the word stands for the object, but in careful analysis we must always remember the whole series: object to thought to word, or word to thought to object.



If the writer is aware of his reader-constituency, he will attempt to express his thoughts and feelings in appropriate language. Both reader and writer must remember that reading is a form of communication,

and words are the medium. If the language is inappropriate, there is a gap between the two and the lines of communication break down. But the burden of vocabulary does not rest entirely with the writer. The reader must erect some bridge-heads in the form of word-knowledge; else he is inaccessible and the writer cannot approach him. Sometimes a reader fails to grasp the meaning of words; he may be irritated by their size because he does not see that the choice of words may indicate, for example, the author's humorous approach accomplished by the use of large words for insignificant details. This kind of writing was characteristic of Washington Irving. Note his description of Rip Van Winkle: "Rip had an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor"; and "The cognomen of Crane was not inapplicable to his appearance."

Laboring under a serious misapprehension, some curriculum makers have placed the reading of "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" in the elementary grades on the ground that they are folk tales, overlooking the influence of eighteenth century classicism on Irving. The reader should judge the writer according to his success or failure weighed in the light of the author's intention.

For many people, the reading of poetry is difficult because, for one reason, the poet's mind works with rapidity, omits words that can be easily inferred, telescopes verbs into adjectives on the basis of association; as, "the ringing plains of windy Troy." The reader hears the clash of sword on shield. It is this condensation of thought and the corresponding condensation of expression, characteristic of poetry, that make extreme demands on the reader.

Figurative language implies an image, a figure, a figuration, imposed on the literal word to illuminate the object of thought. It is comparable to looking at an object through two planes–both transparent—but they create an opaque effect unless they are in the right position with reference to each other. Sometimes the figure or image has the effect of a magnifying glass, bringing the object into startling clarity. But the inappropriate image distorts or even obscures the object under contemplation and confuses the reader.

> Metaphor and simile are devices by which, through breaking up our routine associations and substituting novel ones, our experience becomes refreshed, vivid, and keen. . . . Metaphor

and simile are the poet's rebellion against routine impressions. The moon ceases to be an unmeaning white disc and becomes "Queen of the Night." The sun is a young god driving his chariot across the sky. Beauty is "a candle clear in this dark country of the world thou seest." "The soul of Adonais like a star beacons from the abode where the eternal are."*

The following tribute** to the force of the word was written by an author who was Polish by birth, but thought in French, and wrote in English. Composition was a laborious process for Joseph Conrad; he confessed as much repeatedly in his correspondence, but he was the author of truly great novels.

You perceive the force of a word. He who wants to persuade should put his trust not in the right argument, but in the right word. The power of sound has always been greater than the power of sense. I don't say this by way of disparagement. It is better for mankind to be impressionable than reflective. Nothing humanely great—great, I mean, as affecting a whole mass of lives —has come from reflection. On the other hand, you cannot fail to see the power of mere words; such words as Glory, for instance, or Pity. I won't mention any more. They are not far to seek. Shouted with perseverance, with ardor, with conviction, these two by their sound alone have set whole nations in motion and up-heaved the dry, hard ground on which rests our whole social fabric. There's "virtue" for you if you like! . . . Of course the accent must be attended to. The right accent. That's very important. The capacious lung, the thundering or the tender vocal chords. Don't talk to me of your Archimedes' lever. He was an absent-minded person with a mathematical imagination. Mathematics commands all my respect, but I have no use for engines. Give me the right word and the right accent and I will move the world.

What a dream for a writer! Because written words have their accent too. Yes! Let me only find the right word! Surely it must be lying somewhere among the wreckage of all the plaints and all the exultations poured out aloud since the first day when

* *Arts and the Man* by Irwin Edman. Copyright by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1928, 1939.

** From *A Personal Record* by Joseph Conrad. Published by permission of J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., London.

> hope, the undying, came down on earth. It may be there, close by, disregarded, invisible, quite at hand. But it's no good. I believe there are men who can lay hold of a needle in a pottle of hay at the first try. For myself, I have never had such luck.
>
> And then there is that accent. Another difficulty. For who is going to tell whether the accent is right or wrong till the word is shouted, and fails to be heard, perhaps, and goes down-wind, leaving the world unmoved?

To incorporate a new word into our various vocabularies, we should know its meaning, its etymology, be able to pronounce it, and to spell it. To state the matter differently, we make a new word a part of our thinking, when we know it visually, aurally, orally, kinesthetically, psychologically.

> When we use a word for the first time, we are startled, as if a fire-cracker went off in our neighborhood. We look about hastily to see if anyone has noticed. But finding that no one has, we may be emboldened. A word used three times slips off the tongue with entire naturalness. Then it is ours forever, and with it some phase of life which has been lacking hitherto. For each word presents its own point of view, discloses a special aspect of things, reports some little importance not otherwise conveyed, and so contributes its small emancipation to our tied-up minds and tongues.*

The following sentences are quoted from magazines, newspapers, and books recently published. The sentences are not designed to be a vocabulary test, but it is suggested that the reader cover the sentences and let his eye run down the list of words in the column on the right side of the page. What is the meaning of the words listed? How do you pronounce them? Would you hesitate to use them in writing?

After you have examined the list, uncover the sentences. The first group of twenty sentences throws considerable light on the meaning of the words listed on the right side of the page. The meanings of the listed words in the second group of thirty-five sentences cannot be easily inferred from the context. What is your score?

* George Herbert Palmer, *Self-Cultivation in English.* Copyright, 1909, by Houghton Mifflin Company.

Self-Survey I

Thrice he went into a catatonic trance and successfully feigned death. *catatonic*

By the English campanologist, the playing of tunes is considered to be a childish game, fit only for foreigners; the proper use of bells is to work out mathematical permutations and combinations. *campanologist* *permutations*

The plain remained as flat as a table for a quarter of a mile ahead. Then out of it like a pillar rose the butte; squarely and rigidly skyward it turned, narrowing only as it reached its very top. *butte*

During last week-end, in the hours of darkness, very many skeins of wild geese passed over this district in their northerly journey. *skeins*

General Gordon hurried from post to post, from enterprise to enterprise, from continent to continent with vertiginous rapidity. *vertiginous*

There is the proverbial Chinese xenophobia, the often unreasoning distrust of the intentions of all foreigners. *xenophobia*

He read the message again. He sat down on the bed, breathing and staring, thinking first the old selfish child's thought that comes with the death of a parent, how will it affect me now that this earliest and strongest of protections is gone? The atavism passed, and he walked the room still. *atavism*

As a writer, Cervantes might have revealed his bitterness by excoriating satire; on the contrary, he avoided it as unworthy. *excoriating*

Much of the film is done in interiors representing a tenement flat—an accurate reconstruction of a lower middle-class menage. *menage*

The Ardennes debacle was due primarily to failure of command in the echelon above the commanding officer. *debacle* *echelon*

Rare was the author-protagonist [of autobiography] who had not at least some reason to congratulate himself or who was altogether obscure. Rank, celebrity, or honorable achievement as a rule warranted publication and guaranteed notice for the book. *protagonist*

The boldly left gaps, the admitted *lacunae* in the narrative of the modern autobiographer are themselves telling; they guarantee the veracity of what has been written down. *lacunae*

Like a skater crossing cavernous depths on thin ice, the author skims over the profundities of history with an insouciance that almost suggests he is unaware of them. *insouciance*

Dreiser will probably remain a sort of monolith, half-buried in time and hidden from general view, but the foundation stone in the development of contemporary writing. *monolith*

The messianic hubris, the moral nihilism, and the terrorism of Lenin contained all the seeds of the Stalinism which came to full fruition only in the 1930's. *hubris*

All this seems to indicate that totalitarianism will one day simply disappear leaving no other trace in the history of mankind than exhausted peoples, economic and social chaos, political vacuum, and a spiritual *tabula rasa*. *tabula rasa*

Of the Americans who have won the Nobel Prize for literature, Sinclair Lewis' qualifications for that accolade are much the most impressive.

accolade

Somewhere in attics are bundles of old picture postcards of Grandpa's visit to the exposition, Great Aunt Hepzibah's tour of New York. These old postcards represent treasure to a deltiologist, a devotee of a growing hobby cult dedicated to collecting the changing face of the world.

deltiologist

Much of the book is written in the abstract and pretentious jargon which has become the recognized shibboleth of the intellectual too conscious of the height of his brow.

shibboleth

By the strange ambivalence of a novelist's nature, Meredith was intensely reticent about his personal affairs, and yet revealed his inmost secrets in the pages of his book.

ambivalence

Self-Survey II

It was past four and under a blue-gray sky the first fishing boats were creaking out into a glaucous sea.

glaucous

How is it possible to picture for the reader the quotidian miseries and splendors of a life attached to the inkpot?

quotidian

I am referring to the ideas, expectations, and plans which are based on the Truman Doctrine and its corollary, the policy of the military containment of Russian communism.

corollary

Trimmer was no sycophant. By degrees she assumed the part that is so often played by the humble retainer; from governess she became confidante.

sycophant

Mr. [William] Bliss's intellectual virtuosity enables him to deduce with confidence the games that Shakespeare played as a boy. *virtuosity*

Genius may arise anytime in the most unpropitious physical *milieu.* *milieu*

He created an atmosphere of preciousness in which the awareness of evil was as oppressive as the scent of flowers at a funeral. *preciousness*

The bird continually disturbed Sir Edmund Gosse; finally he sent his neighbor a note, asking her to check the garrulity of her pet. *garrulity*

We cannot afford to erode the brains of the country as we have eroded its soil. We must not be serfs, written down as property in the books of our entrepreneurs. *entrepreneurs*

His party was inclined toward a policy of greater rapprochement with the western democracies. *rapprochement*

We now have the structure of a plot, nine abstract requirements which the neophyte plot-builder must ordinarily satisfy by drawing on his own experiences or imagination. *neophyte*

When I saw the Litchfield Cathedral, on account of some weakness in the great flèche, it was "reticulated and decussated" in steel scaffold, fine as cobweb, hardly less spectacular than the cathedral itself. *flèche* *reticulated* *decussated*

Lord Talbot took umbrage that such an offer had been made for the family papers by a stranger. *umbrage*

The State Department has displayed notable astuteness in its dealings with Tito since his apostasy. *apostasy*

The Trades Unions were threatening to support the miners in their attitude of intransigence. *intransigence*

We may find that instead of a new way of life, we have succeeded in giving the Japanese only a severe trauma. *trauma*

I not only disbelieve utterly, but intensely dislike the doctrine of metempsychosis, which, if I understand it aright, seems the negation of the creative impulse, an apotheosis of staleness. *metempsychosis* *apotheosis*

Leadership will pass from the intellectual, the elite, and will go elsewhere—perhaps to be seized by some exponent of nescience, like Corporal Hitler. *nescience*

Some masochistic compulsion made me tell about the incident at home. *masochistic*

She was stricken. She touched him, feeling the smooth cloth of his dark coat like a chasuble. *chasuble*

The psychologic etiology of crime, penal treatment, and the law are discussed logically. *etiology*

This marvellous monologue, delivered in the plangent sing-song of Carlyle's broad Scottish accent, produced a splendor of expression which could hardly be faced with steady eyes. *plangent*

His obliging nature was the petard upon which he was hoist. *petard*

Carlyle's exacerbated sense of hearing made him acutely sensitive to sound. *exacerbated*

There is in America more than in any other country today a huge, amorphous, inchoate mass of beauty-worship, not yet crystallized into a guiding faith. *amorphous* *inchoate*

The Greek language is peculiarly well adapted to supply the need in English for precise and unambiguous terms with no inherited penumbra of meaning. *penumbra*

If the past to a man is nothing but a dead hand, then in common honesty he must be an advocate of revolution. But if it is regarded as the matrix of present and future, whose potency takes many forms but is not diminished, then he will cherish it scrupulously and labor to read its lessons. *matrix*

The novel concerns four men of disparate shrewdness, will, and morals. *disparate*

The United States has shown that it is determined to "mortise and tenon" with steel the North Atlantic Treaty. *mortise* *tenon*

It is not known what caused the pandemic of 1918. At the outbreak of an epidemic, it is necessary to determine what type of influenza is spreading. *pandemic* *epidemic*

He seldom if ever takes the advice so lavishly given him by the pundits of the press. *pundits*

Prophetic novels have just about reached their arcane limits. *arcane*

Philip Wylie dips the whole world (*The Disappearance*) into an apocalyptic bath, soaps it, scrubs it, and brings it out, four years later, looking to us just about as it did when it went under the Wylian waters of words. *apocalyptic*

What the television pictures lacked was a montage. *montage*

A vast embayment of the Arctic Sea crept southward, deposited beds of hard rock called dolomite, and in time formed a long escarpment near the present border between Canada and the United States.

embayment

escarpment

CHAPTER VI

★

HOW TO READ THE LITERATURE OF KNOWLEDGE

> People read, and read, and read, blandly unconscious of their effrontery in assuming that they can assimilate without any further effort the vital essence which the author has breathed into them. They cannot. And the proof that they do not is shown all the time in their lives. I say that if a man does not spend at least as much time in actively and definitely thinking about what he has read as he has spent in reading, he is simply insulting his author. If he does not submit himself to intellectual and emotional fatigue in classifying the communicated ideas, and in emphasizing on his spirit the imprint of the communicated emotions—then reading with him is a pleasant pastime and nothing else.
>
> *Literary Taste*
> by Arnold Bennett

THE demands of a literate civilization require its citizens to read books designed to enlighten them if they are to share in contemporary thought-life. In a democracy, the average man can take a holiday from thinking only at infinite peril, according to Gerald W. Johnson. It is the literature of information, the literature of knowledge, as De Quincey designates it, that provides the average man with material with which to think. He thinks when he has information with which to think. The thoughtful, educated man regards every age as a crisis, and he looks to the informed thinkers, past and contemporary, to interpret the present and illuminate the future for him.

> The future of our civilization depends upon our ability to select and control our heritage from the past, to alter our present attitudes and habits, and to project fresh forms into which our energies may be freely poured.*

The critical reader needs the literature of information to serve as a base for judgment and decisions, for without knowledge he operates in a vacuum, lacking the means even of self-preservation. For him, critical reading needs no defence. He feels a compulsion to read history, politics, economics, science, whatever helps him to understand his fellowman and his total environment.

The returns from reading the literature of knowledge are rewarding; the demands on the reader are rigorous. Such reading requires acumen to discriminate between sound and fallacious reasoning; it requires the disciplined mind that can follow a train of thought to its logical conclusion. The mature reader of the literature of knowledge possesses a zest for living and a noble curiosity about ideas. If he reads with questioning attention, with a mind free from uninformed bias and with generous toleration, giving the author the chance to justify the faith that the reader has placed in him, then the inner springs of the reader's being will be energized by the dynamic flow of ideas from great books. The literature of knowledge challenges the analytical and the synthetic powers of the reader.

THE QUINTESSENCE

The first concern of the reader is comprehension of what he reads. He asks himself: What is the quintessence of this piece of writing? What is the focus of the writer's thought? What is his purpose, the goal of his thinking in this instance? What is his thesis? What is the center of gravity? What constitutes the central vitality? The answers to these questions provide the reader with the gist of the material that he reads. Grasping the substance is a progressive process, developing as the reader proceeds through the whole body of the material.

* *Sticks and Stones* by Lewis Mumford. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., publishers, New York. Copyright, 1924, by Horace Liveright, Inc.

STRUCTURAL READING

The successful reader of the literature of information acquires the habit of reading structurally; he is sensitive to the architecture of a composition. Students of rhetoric may use such labels as outline, pattern, design, but all the terms refer to organization—the means by which a chaotic mass of ideas is arranged in a form possessing organic unity. The structure, the skeleton, emerges progressively as the reading proceeds. A sensitiveness to structure enables the reader to grasp the ideas in their totality; he is impressed by the unity of the composition; he sees "the long line" emerging. Probably there is no better evidence of superior mentality than the ability to see a serious composition steadily and see it whole.

In his poem, *Autumn,** Roy Campbell expressed a kindred idea:

> I love to see, when leaves depart,
> The clear anatomy arrive,
> Winter, the paragon of art,
> That kills all forms of life and feeling
> Save what is clear and will survive.

To read structurally is to see clear patterns of thought that the plodding, word-by-word reader may fail to detect. To make such patterns evident is the obligation of the writer. As reading and writing are complementary arts, the critical reader involuntarily, after practice, gets his clue from the writer and uses the pattern of reading best adapted to a particular pattern of writing.

READABILITY

The author of factual writing has a special obligation to the reader. The writing must be readable; the author must be accessible. Readability usually resolves into two factors, style and vocabulary. Because the reader of factual information is usually contending with difficult concepts, he is grateful for a style that has flow and rhythmical movement. When the

* From *Adamastor* by Roy Campbell. Reprinted by permission of Faber and Faber, Ltd., publishers.

writer is able to invest factual information with warmth and an imaginative appeal if the material permits, it is not difficult to secure the reader's collaboration. If generalizations are followed by specific instances and illustrations, clarity will be served and the reader encouraged to pursue what may be a difficult train of thought. There are writers who have been able to make informational material readable without sacrificing factual accuracy: W. H. Hudson, William Beebe, John Burroughs, William James, John Muir, Louis Agassiz come to mind. Their imagination was fettered by inexorable facts, yet it had lift.

VOCABULARY

The vocabulary of the literature of knowledge may offer the reader a special challenge, for both the general and the technical vocabularies are involved. If the writer of factual material writes for the general reader, he introduces technical terms in a way that enables the reader to infer their meaning from the context. If he writes for those who have technical interests and knowledge, he may assume an understanding of the technical terms; the responsibility for understanding the vocabulary rests on the reader. If the lines of communication break down, dictionaries and glossaries can re-establish connection. Incorporating new words in one's vocabulary means incorporating new concepts, the essential purpose in reading material that enlarges the intellectual horizon.

INTRODUCTION

The reader ambitious to be enlightened wants to know by what authority one writes on a specific subject. The by-line of an article, the name on the title page of a book should not be overlooked. The phrasing of the title, the introduction, the preface, often give the perceptive reader his clue to the appropriate pattern of reading; they help to establish *rapport* of writer and reader, who usually takes the introductory matter slowly in order that he may orientate himself mentally. Given the writer's thesis, the reader is in the frame of mind to follow an argument to a conclusive Q E D.

The thoughtful editorial usually expresses an opinion on some matter of current interest and then buttresses it with reasons to support the opinion. The introductory paragraph states the editor's opinion, and the reader's mind is set to look for reasons. Or a writer may pose a question in the title or the introduction; sometimes the question is implied. The writer's article or book must provide the answer to the question. To quote Jean Cocteau, "Form must be the form of the mind, not a way of saying things, but of thinking them."

EXTENSIVE READING

The reader habituated to critical reading because of his preoccupation with ideas finds that while nothing is alien to his interests, he tends to explore intensively some one field while maintaining extensive reading in a variety of fields, thus accelerating his intellectual maturity. The reader who explores widely, even superficially, various areas of knowledge is attracted by degrees to reading in the areas of the Humanities, thus rounding out his education and development. It seems difficult to separate great achievement in any field from the biographies of men and women identified with signal accomplishment, and transition from biography to the study of human nature in fiction, drama, poetry, essays, seems logical.

INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY

There is still another argument in favor of reading books of a serious nature addressed primarily to the intellect. Such reading is justified in terms of moral integrity inseparable from regard for the truth. The slip-shod lazy mind, indifferent to accuracy, blind to fallacious arguments, devoid of discipline, indifferent to significant concepts, needs the experience of reading hard, cold facts and deducing conclusions from evidence. Moral integrity cannot be divorced from intellectual integrity. In this connection, the reader may recall the provocative title of one of John Erskine's essays, "The Moral Obligation To Be Intelligent." Mere acquaintance with facts is not enough; it should be supplemented by reflection and often by discussion to aid the reader to experience the full significance of the facts.

MEMORY } The reader of informational literature should remember much of what he reads, if it is to be useful to him. Given a deep-seated interest in ideas, grasping the substance of what he reads, noting the pattern or outline of the composition, the reader finds remembering what he reads a logical result. But superficial reading is antagonistic to remembering. The reader cannot help remembering if the pattern of thought is etched on his brain. The surest way to remember what you read is to read structurally—sensing the orderly unfolding of the author's thought. The reader will recall the substance of the author's material, and if it is worth remembering the author's ideas will be assimilated and will affect the texture of the reader's mind. If by good fortune, the actual words of the author are inescapably right, they will be remembered with little effort on the reader's part, especially if he is sensitive to style and diction. Textbook material especially taxes the memory, because it is frequently so condensed, and more frequently, the style is so pedestrian that the reader must call on all his powers to supply concrete instances, specific details, to bridge the hiatus between sentences. Text-book writers impose a heavy burden on the reader—often heavier than necessary. Perhaps William James' widespread influence was due in part to his gift of style and picturesque vocabulary. He was able to get off the ground and so were his readers. The duller the stuff, the more necessary it is for the reader to summon his imagination to his aid. If he can fuse a body of thought into a glowing, shining whole, he will remember it, for it becomes his creation. It is his for all time.

Following* is an article by Stuart Chase. The phrasing of the title makes the reader expect not only an exposition of the impact of machinery but also a statement of what Mr. Chase thinks of the impact: does the impact have a favorable or unfavorable effect on society? What position does the author take? The paragraphs are numbered for the sake of analysis; each one is followed by a comment or question indicative of the train of thought that might go on in the mind of the critical reader.

* From *The Good and Evil of the New Industrialism*. Reprinted by permission of the author.

THE IMPACT OF MACHINERY

> 1. Can we hope to pass judgment on the net impact of machinery on civilization in the one hundred and fifty years that have passed since James Watt stopped in his walk on Glasgow Green one Sunday afternoon and smiled, because the solution of the problem of the vacuum in a steam engine had come to him? The reader will have to strike his own balance, but as I study the schedules it seems to me that to date the machine has brought more woe than it has happiness, and that the cause of civilization in its noblest sense has not been materially advanced.

In the last sentence of the first paragraph, Mr. Chase takes the negative side of the argument. The reader, withholding for the present his own conclusion, reads to find the reasons advanced by Mr. Chase for his negative position. He states his thesis: to date, the machine has brought more woe than happiness.

> 2. When one looks at the ravages of the World War, the desolating ugliness of most industrial districts, the monotonous dreariness of much factory work, the vast train of misery which flows from technological unemployment, the unrewarding nature of mechanized recreation, the chaos into which our religious and ethical standards have been cast by the pressure of modern industry—these things over-balance, for the day-by-day life of the average human being, the gains of a greater flood of commodities, a somewhat lopsided prosperity, a lifting of back-breaking toil in certain areas, a decline in illiteracy, and a truly splendid advance in science and applied technology. The margin may not be wide, but I believe it can be recorded only in red figures. If by some divine fiat the America of 1929 were made static for a century, with no prospect of change, I, for one, would be glad to go back to the Newburyport of my great-great-grandfather, living out my life without benefit of power engines. Most thoughtful persons would prefer any of a dozen former civilizations to the modern world were it to be frozen in its existing form.

In the second paragraph, Mr. Chase makes a list of the unmistakable blots on modern society; it is a longer list than that of the good features.

a. But can the machines be held wholly responsible for the ravages of the World War?

b. If there is desolating ugliness in some areas, is not the machine responsible for some beauty?

c. If factory life is dreary, was not the sunrise-to-sundown toil of the pre-machine age somewhat dreary, too?

d. Is unemployment characteristic of only the industrial age?

e. Can the pressure of modern industry be held wholly accountable for the chaos of religious and ethical standards?

The alert reader will read this interesting article with the preceding questions injecting themselves between the lines; he will suspend judgment.

The paragraph concludes with a still stronger statement of the writer's thesis: see the last sentence of paragraph 2.

> 3. This choice is a purely academic one, however. There is not the slightest possibility of our age remaining static. Technology is in a fury of change, and civilization, willy-nilly, must change with it. The real question, as against the academic one, is whether the forces we now see at work are destined to make for a higher or a lower form of civilization. Again, as I study the schedules, I believe that the direction is up rather than down. If certain outstanding dangers can be mitigated, there is good reason to hope that in another generation—perhaps in another decade—the gains will outdistance the losses, and the balance swing from red to black. As in some diseases, it seems to be a case of getting worse before getting better. The introduction of machinery into a given culture, whether it be English, American, German, or Japanese, is the cause for a violent internal pain and a great deal of human suffering. But we have already had years enough behind us to see that the condition is not necessarily permanent; that it is possible to live in some sort of domestic accord with the billion horses; that, as the decades march, the adjustment improves. The curve has not yet reached the level of certain former civilizations measured in terms of leisure, culture, and happiness, but it is going up.

In the third paragraph the author admits that the direction of civilization is rather up than down; the adjustment improves, but the present civilization has not yet reached the level of certain former

civilizations. Certain outstanding dangers can be mitigated. The reader is prepared for a possible reversal of the author's position.

> 4. I believe that it will continue to go up until we cross all earlier lines and stand surrounded by the noblest civilization which the world has ever seen—*provided the menaces can be controlled.* Failing that control, we may go down in an equally spectacular collapse.

The fourth paragraph is short and provides the outline for the rest of the article. A great civilization is a possibility—*provided the menaces can be controlled.* What are the menaces? How can they be controlled?

> 5. The outstanding menace is, of course, that of mechanized warfare. When machines are already available in a hundred airports to abolish England or France or the eastern seaboard of the United States, in a few hours' time, it borders on futility to talk of upward curves and shining futures. If a few stupid politicians can, on nearly any bright morning, give the word to a handful of hot-headed boys to blow the world to bits, progress and the hope of progress become the watering of a rose garden on the brink of a volcano. If mechanized warfare is not abolished before the next major outbreak of hostilities, mechanical civilization becomes the most colossal liability *homo sapiens* ever blundered into.

The first mitigating factor is the abolition of mechanized warfare. The reader wonders what those countries that have the means of mechanized warfare will do. Suppose there is no agreement. Can we secure global unity of action?

> 6. Secondly, intelligent control must be exercised in coordinating the proliferating specialization of the modern world. Cities are becoming too large, too congested, exhibiting too many exposed nerves. Industry is being overweighted at the expense of agriculture, ultimately threatening the basis of food supply. Men and women are being educated to perform—often very skillfully—one tiny part of one process in one department of one industry, and losing all sense of contact with the process as a whole. Ways and means must be found to avoid excessive departmentalizing.

> The billion horses must be guided or they will some day run amuck.

In the sixth paragraph, the author protests against specialization. The reader reflects: Is there no defense for large cities? Is the machine necessarily a menace? Would most people be willing to revert to the pre-machine age? Query: Does the writer see both sides of the question? Do we suspect undue emphasis of one side? Cannot specialization in medicine, for example, be defended?

> 7. Thirdly, the machine presents a very serious threat to the earth's store of natural resources. These must be guarded and husbanded up to such time as the technology of substitutes is thoroughly worked out. Otherwise, with oil, or copper, or the by-products of coal gone, and no substitute available, we shall face a very nasty crisis indeed. It may well be that precisely such a crisis will come in respect to petroleum in the next decade, entailing a staggering human cost.

The reader wonders if machines have had no part in conservation? Is postponement of the solution the way to meet the crisis?

> 8. Finally, we have to reckon, and that immediately, with the growing threat of unemployment. Machines are now displacing men at a fantastic rate. No sooner have the "talkies" undermined the jobs of ten thousand theatre musicians than the teletypesetter threatens the livelihood of thousands of printers. Unless some real constructive action is taken we are liable to be faced, for the first time in the history of the Industrial Revolution, with a park bench which grows longer and longer. The total firing rate, it is believed, is beginning to exceed the total hiring rate, and, saddest of all, it is the older men who are destined to suffer the most. Owen D. Young has called unemployment the greatest blot on the going economic system, and further says that while the world does not owe a man a living, business owes a man an opportunity to earn a living.

As the critical reader analyzes paragraph 8, he inquires: Was there no unemployment before the machine age? If a machine does the work of several men, does it not create new jobs? New machines must be manufactured. They must be tended. May not unemployment be a part of the transition period?

9. Business and the State could go far toward ending unemployment if they took Mr. Young's philosophy seriously. What is called for is industrial planning on a continental scale. Half-way measures will do little good. We need initially reliable statistics on unemployment; then a great program of public works, a gradual reduction of working hours (the New York building trades have just won the five-day week, thus joining the two hundred thousand workers in the country who have already secured it), and lastly a sound program of unemployment insurance for the inevitable margin which will still remain.

10. If these four menaces—war, over-specialization, failure of natural resources, and unemployment—can be held in check, it may well be that we shall find no limit to the greatness of the civilization before us. The penalty of power is the creation of sufficient intelligence to direct it. Most of us are still too busy in our own little backyards to realize the awful magnitude of that challenge.

The ninth paragraph outlines a constructive program for eliminating unemployment. The last paragraph sounds discouraged and re-echoes the spirit of the introduction.

The foregoing readable article by a noted economist puts critical readers in a mood of opposition; they unconsciously argue for the affirmative side as they read; they think that only one side of the question is being presented. They are not convinced by the article that the machine is wholly a menace without any compensating qualities. But the article is challenging and provides the counter-irritant that makes it a profitable reading experience.

The article by Mr. Chase is representative of a body of material dealing with economic questions, an essential area to be explored by the mature, critical reader. The following article* by Rollin T. Chamberlin directs the reader's thinking to geology and is an excellent illustration of scientific writing that is scholarly and yet stimulating to the lay reader because of its scientific accuracy and readable style.

The research specialist concerned with the process of learning has found that kinesthetic activity at times may aid understanding; for example, a difficult passage may be clearer if it is read aloud, or if key

* From *The World and Man*, edited by Forest Ray Moulton. Copyright, 1937, by the University of Chicago.

words and phrases are underlined simultaneously with the reading. Such procedures are an exception to the rule that in reading the mind operates more efficiently when there is a minimum of physical activity. The student-reader might like to experiment with the following selection, "Present and Future." It is suggested that he underline lightly with pencil the key words and phrases as he reads, and note whether or not the underlining promotes comprehension.

PRESENT AND FUTURE

The brief span of 25,000 years since the ice sheets retreated from our northern states is called the geologic present, or more correctly the Recent epoch. Whether this is but another interglacial stage, or whether the Ice Age is completed, we do not know. We do know, however, that the latest ice advance did not come so far south as the earlier ones. Diastrophism, with which in earlier times glaciation was associated, also appears to be on the wane, as the earth is gradually emerging from the latest of its many episodes of revolutionary disturbance. Volcanic activity likewise is slowly diminishing.

Since most present mountains have been uplifted recently, geologically speaking, they stand very high today, canyons are deep and rugged, and world scenery in general is about at its best. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are still frequent and spectacular. Our climates continue varied and variable. If variety be the spice of life, we are fortunate in the time of our existence on the globe, for the present days are among the more eventful and interesting ones of its long history.

The reader has perhaps noted that the main thread throughout the earth history is the geologic rhythm. The rhythm is an unended alternation of lands raised and lands lowered. The positive beats of the rhythm are the times of exceptional diastrophism and extensive emergence of land areas. They are relatively short—times of extremes and rapid changes, topographic, climatic, biologic—and they separate much longer, quieter intervals. For more than a thousand million years this rhythmic succession of events has occurred in orderly fashion.

Just previous to the beginning of a typical geologic period the continents were restored and their lands were recovered from the clutches of the sea which, for a time, had partially engulfed them.

Uplifting brought large areas high above sea level, and severe continental climates were the rule. Then, slowly but inexorably, erosion proceeded to wear down the lands and to transport their materials to the oceans. The rock debris dumped into the oceans caused sea level to rise and the seas to inundate the reduced lands. Any slight sinking of parts of the upstanding continents increased their submergence. After a score or two of millions of years the remaining lands became the rule. It was at such times that warm-water-loving corals built reefs in Spitzbergen, and figs and magnolias grew in Greenland. Such was the long middle portion of a typical geologic period.

Had erosion by running water continued long enough without interruption, eventually all the lands of the globe would have been reduced to sea level, and as waves continued the erosive process, all vestiges of land would have disappeared beneath a universal ocean. Land life would have come to an end. But this did not happen, though many geologic periods have passed into history. The greatest known submergence of North America at any one time was about 60 per cent of its present area. Long before land life was placed in serious jeopardy from overwhelming seas, unbalanced stresses developed within the earth, diastrophism set in, continents were restored, and the geologic period came to a close. Cycle after cycle of this sort constitutes the geologic rhythm.

Having thus seen in a general way what has happened on the earth during the last thousand million years, we are in a position to understand where we are today in the terrestrial rhythm and to peer with some confidence into the future. Our confidence rests upon our belief in the orderliness of the universe; as things have been throughout the geologic ages, so doubtless they will continue in a general way in the future.

The areally large, high-standing continents, the vast mountain chains recently uplifted, the intense glaciation of geologic yesterday, and our present diversified climates tell us that the earth has just experienced one of the characteristic diastrophic episodes of its rhythm and that it is now about at the beginning of a new geologic period. As time goes on, the mountainous areas will gradually be reduced by erosion and lose much of their rugged beauty, and the average elevation of our land will steadily decline. In all probability shallow seas, encroaching from the Gulf of

> Mexico, will again inundate a portion of the Mississippi basin as they have done repeatedly in the past. Other large areas may be expected also to become submerged. As a long-time forecast, a warmer and less variable climate may be predicted. But neither should the warmer climate raise our hopes, nor the inundation by the sea excite our fears, because this prediction is not expected to be fulfilled before several million years have rolled by.
>
> As the earth has been for the last thousand million years, so it is likely to continue for hundreds of millions of years to come. Cycle may be expected to follow cycle, and we may confidently believe that, through all these vicissitudes, our globe will continue to be a fit abode for living beings. Geology affirms that our environment at least will continue favorable. Apparently only the advent of another star, coming close to our system, can wreck the planets and start a new family of them circling around the sun. As the chances are that such close approach will not happen again within millions of millions of years, we may look expectantly toward a very long future.

The article just quoted includes one word that is unusual; yet its meaning can be easily inferred from the context and speculation about its meaning should not interrupt the continuous reading of the article: *diastrophism*. It furnishes an opportunity for word exploration. *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* gives the etymology: the Greek prefix, *dia*, through, thoroughly, and the Greek verb *strephein*, to turn. Meaning: The process or processes by which the crust of the earth is deformed, producing continents and ocean basins, plateaus, and mountains, folds of strata, and faults (Geology); also the results of the process. It is easy to comprehend its derived meaning: any process or result of upheaval, as in customs and beliefs, involving important change or changes.

Before you complete your investigation of *diastrophism*, you will associate with it the following words: (1) *catastrophe*, a turning down, hence calamity, (2) *apostrophe*, a turning away from one's audience to address a person or thing or abstract idea or imaginary object, (3) *strabismus*, a squinting or turning, resulting from eye muscles not properly coordinated, and (4) *strophe*, the part of an ancient Greek ode sung by the chorus when moving from right to

left. This does not exhaust the list of words built up on the Greek infinitive, *strephein,* to turn.

The next article,* "The Blackout on Economic Facts," was originally a speech, and possesses the characteristics of both spoken and written discourse. As you read the article, you can easily make a motion picture of what goes on in your mind as you read. Read the article first and then re-read it, noting the comments in the right column. The paragraphs are numbered to facilitate matching the comments on the right with the paragraphs.

THE BLACKOUT ON ECONOMIC FACTS

by James E. McCarthy

1. As one grows older, he acquires, if not wisdom, at least the saving grace of prudence. He thinks before he speaks, and becomes less inclined to make categorical statements on matters of which he has only a casual knowledge. By the same token, he learns sometimes from sad experience, not to take at full value the sweeping but often unsubstantiated statements that are the debased medium of exchange of the thoughtless. A pronunciamento that he might once have accepted almost as coming from Mount Sinai, he considers critically. If he finds it a conglomeration of hasty generalizations, false assumptions, and loosely defined terms, he promptly rejects it, and tags its originators as untrustworthy.

1. Dean McCarthy of Notre Dame;.he must be well informed. Graceful introduction, designed to disarm his listeners; the speaker does not think that he is infallible.

2. The mature thinker sets up a mental "proceed with caution" sign when he has to deal with the man who sees all men and all issues only in solid blacks and whites—that is, either all

2. The second paragraph continues the idea of the first paragraph; the speaker is not inclined to make categorical statements.

* Published in the New York *Sun*, January 10, 1949. Reprinted by permission of the author.

good or all bad; who insists in dealing with what logicians call universals. He is wary of accepting such comprehensive words as "all," "every," "always," "in every case," "no" and "never."

3. This little homily was inspired by a statement which I have heard again and again, just as you have. "Americans," we are told, "are the most literate people in the world."

3. The third paragraph intimates the subject: Americans literate? The speaker wonders.

4. Well, so they are, but only in a manner of speaking. I hope that you will question neither my patriotism nor my regard for the achievements of the American educational system if I qualify that assertion. If "literate" means that except for a negligible minority, Americans can read and write, the statement is defensible. But if by "literate" we mean that Americans are well-informed, that they read and listen and weigh and understand, that they properly discount special pleadings and that they arrive at conclusions independently, then we are not only an illiterate, but also, an undiscriminating people. Too many of us are ignorant and too many are gullible but do we dare be ignorant or gullible today when so many strident voices are clamoring to be heard? When the cool voice of reason is lost in the din and tumult created by spurious messiahs who fear more than anything else a cool examination of their fulminations?

4. Here is a definition of literacy. Americans are illiterate and undiscriminating—the author's thesis.

5. We are faced by an appalling fact—we have more educational facilities than any other nation. But we have failed dismally to teach a sound working

5. This paragraph states that in spite of our educational facilities, we are illiterate.

knowledge of how we live, and what we live for.

6. A few years ago the New York *Times* made a survey to determine our familiarity with American history. The results were so shocking that educational circles are still feeling their repercussions. To the majority of persons surveyed, names like Adams, Marquette, Perry, Wayne, Hamilton, and Richard were just so many semantic blanks. Even more abysmal was their ignorance of the Constitution and its amendments, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence and the other historic documents that have shaped the course of our national morals and that have guided our thinking and acting for 150 years.

6. We do not know American history.

A Blackout Exists

7. But if dimness prevails in the area of history, the only word that describes the field of economics is "blackout." Not only is there a lack of fundamental information, but much of what is assumed to be true is anything but true. This lack of economic literacy, I believe, can be documented by citing the number of industrial disputes arising during the past decade and a half. There have been disputes —for which you and I must bear their ultimate cost—between contesting labor organizations, between management and workers, between so-called liberals and conservatives, between leftists and rightists, and between those of opposing political faiths. In some instances, there have been

7. We lack economic literacy; in fact, a blackout exists.

honest differences, but too often discord has grown out of a cumulative lack of knowledge of economic truths.

8. And may I lose no time in pointing out that in this country a large, and still growing, element is quick to take advantage of our economic ignorance. They play on it with their propaganda as a musician plays a harp.

8. Here is a word of warning; our economic ignorance makes us a prey to propaganda.

9. Economic illiteracy stems, in large part, from bad propaganda. Some of it is bad propaganda both in word and deed on the part of the beneficiaries of our economic system. When I say in deed, I refer to the sad fact that especially during recent years workers, investors, and managers have so stressed areas of disagreement among them that the bystander forgets the much larger areas of agreement in which their common welfare lies.

9. Economic illiteracy stems, in large part, from bad propaganda; there is more agreement than disagreement among workers, investors, and managers.

10. What I mean by propaganda in word, I intend to develop during the course of these remarks. Meanwhile, I might state a thesis in some such fashion as this—those who believe in the American system of free enterprise have, in large measure, failed to make known its merits. They have been bad propagandists in a good cause. But, those who would modify the American system beyond all recognition or overthrow it completely are remarkably astute in their attempts to popularize a so-called "managed economy," which is just another name for totalitarianism. They are good propagandists—in a bad cause.

10. The writer calls a "managed economy" totalitarianism.

11. Propaganda is an old term and a good practice that has been keeping bad

11. Propaganda can have a good meaning.

company. "To propagandize" means to diffuse, to spread, to disseminate. Before World War I "propaganda" was most familiar as the name of an institution in Rome—The College of Propaganda, which had the responsibility of spreading abroad the doctrines of Christianity.

12. In our country, however, propaganda in its worst sense is now the tool of organized groups which, under the banners of so-called equality and federation, seek to promote their own misbegotten concepts of Utopia. It has become the tool through which pleaders for a new world order would lead us to debase or discard American standards in favor of the decadent standards of a weary, cynical Europe. Honest men and scheming men, obstinate men and misinformed men, seize upon propaganda to establish the fallacious premise that American industrial progress is opposed to the public interest; that our business corporations, management executives, and owners of businesses are united in some gigantic, sinister conspiracy to enslave the American people.

12. We are the victims of propaganda in its worst sense.

The Security Phase

13. Who are the propagandists of false economic doctrines? Some of them are Communists, either avowed or under-cover. Some are advocates of what they euphemistically called a "welfare state." Some are starry-eyed theorists; some are practical and cold-blooded pragmatists. All have access to the radio, to newspaper columns;

13. Who are the propagandists of false economic doctrines?

they appear in labor circles and among the die-hard apostles of the New Deal.

14. Although their labels or their mediums may differ, their common thesis is that free enterprise has failed to provide the freedoms that a managed economy, under the agency of a welfare state, would secure for all our people. Their belief, in which they may be sincere, but certainly mistaken, is that the welfare state would provide minimum work hours, maximum pay, freedom from economic insecurity, vacations, education, more housing, dental care, pensions, medical care, and all the rest of it, within a pattern wherein no one would have to work especially hard.

14. What are the false economic doctrines?

15. Just in passing, I might suggest that we be careful about the word security. We Americans know one kind of security well. The security which results from the proper functioning of a system of individual initiative and private enterprise in which labor, ownership, and management are jealous of their rights and properly respectful of their duties. But there is another kind of security—the complete security of the slave laborer in Russia's concentration camps. No one could possibly be more secure than he. In point of fact, he is even physically secured by locks and bars so that he cannot escape from Stalin's Utopia.

15. There are two kinds of security: the American and the Russian.

16. I know something of history—and I cannot recall a single instance in which a Utopia has worked successfully; nor can I recall an instance in which artificial controls, either of men

16. Utopias have never been successful.

or commodities, have long endured successfully. Attempts to control wheat prices were failing as far back as the Italian experiment in the fourth century. In our own country, Utopias have been foredoomed to failure from the elegant Brook Farm experiment to Helicon Hall, on a small scale; and to the New Deal, on a national scale.

17. You and I, knowing social and economic history, know that experiments which run counter to sound principles may have a temporary and partial success. We also know that when they fail, as fail they must, the faithful few who were deaf to the siren song of the visionaries, must first repair the damage done by the experimenters and then build a new structure.

17. Experiments that run counter to sound principles fail in the end.

18. Just now those who have retained their strong faith in the American system have a twofold task. First, they must offset the bad propaganda of alien ideologists. Secondly, they must begin an intelligent campaign of education to keep our people informed of the truth, which is, that the way to economic salvation lies not in the welfare state, but in adherence to the sound principles that have made the United States the economic wonder of the world.

18. Those who believe in the American system have a twofold task.

19. I can think, offhand, of a notable instance where bad propaganda has succeeded and good propaganda, what there has been of it, has failed. I refer to taxes on corporate income.

19. Bad propaganda succeeded in securing taxes on corporate income.

How Rich Are They?

20. Ever since the post civil war period when the Rockefellers, Carnegies,

20. In the popular mind, the corporation is bad.

Fricks, Vanderbilts, Harrimans, Huntingtons, and Hills were emerging as industrial giants, the corporation has been suspect, thanks, in some part, to early abuses which they have since corrected. But the reputation lingers on. In the popular mind, the corporation is big; therefore, it is bad. It deals in huge sums; therefore it is rich, and a ready and seemingly inexhaustible source of government revenue.

21. But how rich are our corporations today? As L. Robert Driver pointed out in a *Saturday Evening Post* editorial: "At the end of the war in 1945, American corporations had less equity capital by at least $7,000,000,000 than they had in 1930. They lived in the 30's and early 40's on the fat accumulated before 1930. The large profits and surpluses now assumed to be making investors rich represent only a fraction of the money needed to replenish this deficit in capital—that is to say, to re-equip American industry for the job of producing the things which Americans, to say nothing of the other peoples of the world, so urgently need."

21. American corporations lack the capital to re-equip American industry.

22. So much for one misconception. There are others; in pure tax theory, there is little more justification for a corporate income tax, than there is for the tax-farming system of the Roman Empire. But our taxing bodies seem to assume that "what people don't know don't hurt them." It is true that people don't know, but they are hurt, because high corporate taxes discourage investment in com-

22. There are many misconceptions.

mon stocks, and because corporations are the most fertile source of new wealth in America.

23. The power to tax is still the power to destroy. No good purpose can be served by raising taxes to such confiscatory levels that the stream of private capital that will take risks ceases to flow into the means of production.

23. No good can come from taxes that confiscate.

24. You and I know these things so well that I feel guilty for having dwelt upon them so long. But we are in the minority.

24. Here is a personal note: the speaker and his audience are in the minority.

25. How can we account for public apathy and ignorance? Too few serious efforts have been made to tell the people the true story. Of those that have been made, too many have missed the goal for reasons as varied as their sources.

25. The public is apathetic and ignorant about economic questions.

Doesn't Register

26. Management, it is true, is increasingly aware of the necessity of telling its story. What it has lacked is the proper approach. Our management reports win high praise from management men. They are written with the rhetorical flourishes of management language. But they might as well be written in classic Greek, in so far as the public is concerned. They are honest enough, but many of them are also dull, and clothed in an excessively involved language that causes the man in the street, whom it should enlighten, to read the comics instead.

26. The reports of management do not enlighten the man in the street.

27. Yet truth about industrial affairs is desperately needed. The puzzled

27. Truth about industrial affairs is desperately needed.

citizen is being tugged first this way and that way by the mass-pressure campaigns of free enterprise and the ponderous word-mongering of management.

28. The job of the American business leader now is to re-establish public confidence in the integrity, capacity and ability of American private enterprise. He must dispel the fog of suspicion and distrust in which he has been forced to operate for the past fifteen years, and probably for another four years.

28. Confidence in American business must be re-established.

29. Cold intelligence, combined with thrifty, deep wisdom tells us that harmony in our economic society need not be as elusive as some would have us believe. I think we can have, if we wish, a reasonably expertly informed public, with reasonably substantial prospect of their friendliness and co-operation if we progress toward great and simple goals. I think we can defeat the highly organized, highly financed economic illiteracy in our country when we, as good propagandists, sweep away the barriers which in the past have prevented us from making the definite and positive declarations of business policy, conduct, and intent which the American people could always understand.

29. Good propagandists can sweep away economic illiteracy.

30. Being a human institution, business is not perfect. It has made mistakes, and some of them have been bad ones. I have no doubt that it will make a great many more. On the other hand, industry's critics, also being human, have played up industry's

30. American business conducts its business, on the whole, on a moral plane.

shortcomings out of all proportion to its achievements. The record shows that the vast majority of American business conducts its affairs on a moral, ethically sound, contributory, and gainful level.

31. In submitting these observations to you, I should like to believe that despite the accumulation of misunderstandings and grievances that seems to characterize our economy, that that economy still possesses the leadership and talents and standards and conscience and imagination to write a sound prescription designed to restore our economy to a harmonious rewarding level, rather than the precarious peace dominated by the total state that influences so much of the economic thinking today.

31. American economy possesses the leadership to restore American economy to a rewarding level.

32. Our struggle for safety and survival can be made sure only when we realize that real truth is always social, and when we strike out eloquently and vigorously through the information-propaganda channels now available to us, to mobilize man's reason so that it will dominate his emotions.

32. To survive, we must mobilize man's reason so that it will dominate his emotions.

If you glance back at the running outline, you will be able to condense the substance of this speech in a few lines: The American public is economically illiterate, the victim of bad propagandists who support a planned economy. There is considerable prejudice against corporations who, alone, have the capital needed by American industry. We, the minority, must re-establish the confidence of the people in American business, if we are to survive.

The critical reader wants to know the author's approach to his material, for he knows that he should make a similar approach; else he and the author will proceed at cross purposes. In the following

book review,* the author records her impression of Thoreau's *Journals*. The review, in less competent hands, could have been a record of interesting facts about Thoreau. But, instead, the reviewer chose to present Thoreau in a negative attitude toward his environment, and then in a positive, optimistic attitude after he had solved to his satisfaction the business of living. The reviewer is a competent reader; else she could not have written a review so well organized. The reader of the following article finds a massing of negative details and then of affirmative, and finally the author's conclusion: "He cut away all that was not life and sucked life close to the bone and found it sweet."

Such organization helps the reader to remember what he reads, for his reaction to the article is orderly and systematic. He can reduce the article to approximately three sentences. The comments on the right side of the page, numbered to correspond with the paragraphs, explain the organization of the article.

WRITER OF JOURNALS

by Diana Lejeune Merritt

1. At the age of twenty-eight Henry David Thoreau took a long look at his native village of Concord, Massachusetts, and arrived at the conclusion that "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."

1. The theme is implied: Thoreau resolved not to live a life of quiet desperation like the mass of men. Note: "a long look."

2. As he strode about the outskirts of his town it seemed to him that he must hear a different drummer from his neighbours, so little did he feel like keeping pace with them or obeying the same laws. He observed that most men had sold themselves into lifelong bondage in order to pay for a house and food and shelter. On one side of the road was a man who was making

2. In second paragraph: he heard a different drummer: he did not feel like keeping pace with his neighbors or obeying the same laws. They had sold themselves into bondage for a house and food and shelter. "On one side . . . into workhouses": specific details amplifying "lifelong bondage."

* Published in *The Manchester Guardian*, January 11, 1951, and reprinted by permission of the author.

himself sick in order to protect himself against a sick day, and opposite to him a farmer, chained to his mortgaged barn, "his Augean stables never cleansed," so that even the herds he tended appeared to have more freedom than himself. Shopkeepers sat with crossed legs all day and never once came out into the sun to stretch. Thoreau silently congratulated them for not having committed suicide long ago! The housewives of Concord were the saddest of all. Did they never venture out of doors? The scrubbing of tubs and the shining of door-knobs and the perpetual sewing made slaves of them all. Did it never occur to these driven women that they had changed their dwelling-houses into work-houses?

3. The more he walked and the more he looked around him the more it seemed to Thoreau that his neighbours were all "doing penance in a thousand remarkable ways." And all for what purpose? To keep the vital heat in their bodies by means of food, shelter, and clothing.

3. "The more . . . clothing": restatement of preceding paragraph and summary.

4. Thoreau concluded that it would be better to live in a hollow tree. Was not our real task "to subdue a few cubic feet of flesh"? He wished to be a sort of Columbus, "exploring whole new continents within himself . . . opening new channels, not of trade but of thought." If, by reducing his wants, he could free himself from the slavery of society and the mechanics of living, would life prove to be mean or sublime? He felt that he must know the answer.

4. Fourth paragraph: Thoreau's conclusion and determination. His protest ends; constructive program begins; he is a Columbus to himself. He searches for the answer.

5. On Independence Day, 1845, Thoreau turned away from his native village and walked south a mile and a half into the great adventure of his life—two years of solitude in a hut on Walden Pond. He turned his back on men and succeeded in walking into their hearts. After reading his journals there are few men we know better than this solitary man and his pond.

5. Note the change in spirit: the first four paragraphs portray life that is grim and sombre. After Independence Day, *1845, life is a great adventure; he found it unbelievably beautiful.*

6. Simplify, simplify, simplify! wrote Thoreau. One desk and two chairs would be enough. "Thank God I can sit and I can stand without the aid of a furniture warehouse!" Thoreau wished to study universal laws and not spend his time in dusting. "I had three pieces of limestone on my desk, but I was terrified to find that they required to be dusted daily, when the furniture of my mind was all undusted still, and I threw them out of the window in disgust." If home-grown beans three times a day proved too distracting, Thoreau ate but once. When Channing or Emerson came to visit him, they sat outside under his pines where "the sun never faded the carpet . . . and a priceless domestic swept the floor and kept the things in order."

6. Procedure was to simplify his existence.

7. Now that he had reduced the mechanics to a minimum, did life prove to be mean or sublime? Thoreau found it unbelievably beautiful. He seemed to have crossed some invisible boundary and life suddenly expanded, became more elastic, more full of stars and fragrance. The iron bonds of convention melted within him, and new and more universal laws began to take

7. This paragraph expands "unbelievably beautiful." Note the specific details that are the antithesis of bondage: there is an exuberant tone in the passage indicative of Thoreau's exuberance.

their place. His days were no longer "minced into hours and fretted by the ticking of a clock." Long before the village was stirring, Thoreau was bathing in his pond at sunrise and would often sit in his sunny doorway until noon, lost in contemplation, while the birds flew in and out of his house at will. His mind had a chance to wander beyond the usual limits of thought and imagination. The very grass at his door seemed to him to stretch beyond the pond "to the prairies of the West and the steppes of Tartary." In the fall he lay on his back and watched the wild-goose flying down from Canada to winter in some southern bayou, while underneath this cosmopolitan bird the slaves of Concord trudged as usual to barn or business or sink. In winter Thoreau was awakened by the frost cracking the ground, and when Walden Pond froze solid he used to lie full length on the ice and watch the great gold and emerald pickerel swimming in his cool, serene world far below. But in every season Thoreau worked on his journals; "he confessed to them and then drew sustenance from them, 'as a bear sucks his claws in winter.' "

8. Alone in the woods, Thoreau came awake—fully awake for the first time in his life. He felt so keenly alive that life itself became a sort of living poem. But he could not possibly explain this to his friends. They were always asking him if he was not lonely out there at Walden, so far from folks in Concord. "Lonely? Why should I be lonely? Is not our planet in the Milky Way? . . .

8. After Thoreau's declaration of freedom, his life became a living poem.

Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?" He cut away all that was not life and sucked life close to the bone and found it sweet. "I learned this at least by my experiment: if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavours to live the life that he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

The following article by Walt Whitman starts from a thesis stated boldly in the first paragraph: Modern science and democracy challenge poetry to put them in its statements. "This," said Whitman, "I have unwittingly done." The article defends Whitman's conception of poetry as exemplified in "Leaves of Grass."

If you will note the gravity centers expressed in glosses down the right side of the following pages, you will find that the clear outline of the article emerges, the "clear anatomy."

A BACKWARD GLANCE O'ER TRAVEL'D ROADS
(Preface to November Boughs, 1888)

by Walt Whitman

The thesis is stated.

Modern science and democracy seem'd to be throwing out their challenge to poetry to put them in its statements in contradistinction to the songs and myths of the past. As I see it now, I have unwittingly taken up that challenge and made an attempt at such statements.

The theme of "Leaves of Grass" is humanity in the United States in the nineteenth century.

For grounds for *Leaves of Grass*, as a poem, I abandon'd the conventional themes, which do not appear in it: none of the stock ornamentation, or choice plots of love or war, or high, exceptional personages of Old-World song; nothing, as I may say, for beauty's sake—no legend, or myth, or romance, nor euphemism, nor rhyme, but the broadest average of humanity and its identities in the new ripen-

ing Nineteenth Century, and especially in each of their countless examples and practical occupations in the United States today.

One main contrast of the ideas behind every page of my verses, compared with establish'd poems, is their different relative attitude towards God, towards the objective universe, and still more (by reflection, confession, assumption, etc.) the quite changed attitude of the ego, the one chanting or talking, towards himself and towards his fellow-humanity. It is certainly time for America, above all, to begin this readjustment in the scope and basic point of view of verse; for everything else has changed. As I write, I see in an article on Wordsworth, in one of the current English magazines, the lines, "A few weeks ago an eminent French critic said that, owing to the special tendency to science and to its all-devouring force, poetry would cease to be read in fifty years." But I anticipate the very contrary. Only a firmer, vastly broader, new area begins to exist—nay, is already form'd—to which the poetic genius must emigrate. Whatever may have been the case in years gone by, the true use for the imaginative faculty of modern times is to give ultimate vivification to facts, to science, and to common lives, endowing them with glows and glories and final illustriousness which belong to every real thing, and to real things only. Without that ultimate vivification—which the poet or other artist alone can give—reality would seem incomplete, and science, democracy, and life itself, finally in vain.

The ideas in Whitman's verses differ from those of established forms. Everything has changed; verse should change.

A new area will open to poetry. It will give vivification to facts, science, common lives. Without the vivification of poetry, science, democracy, and life seem vain.

Few appreciate the moral revolutions of our age, which have been profounder far than the material or inventive or war-produced ones. The Nineteenth Century, now well towards its close (and ripening into fruit the seeds of

The nineteenth century is an age of moral revolution. New poetic messages, new forms and expressions are inevitable.

the two preceding centuries)—the uprisings of national masses and shifting of boundary lines —the historical and other prominent facts of the United States—the war of attempted Secession—the stormy rush and haste of nebulous forces—never can future years witness more excitement and din of action—never completer change of army front along the whole line, the whole civilized world. For all these new and evolutionary facts, meanings, purposes, new poetic messages, new forms and expressions are inevitable.

My Book and I—what a period we have presumed to span! Those thirty years from 1850 to '80—and America in them! Proud, proud indeed may we be, if we have cull'd enough of that period in its own spirit to worthily waft a few live breaths of it to the future!

Leaves of Grass covers the period from 1850 to 1880. For modern song, there are themes more appropriate than the conventional themes of poetry. The old imaginative works rest on long trains of presuppositions.

There are, I know, certain controlling themes that seem endlessly appropriated to the poets —as war, in the past—in the Bible, religious rapture and adoration—always love, beauty, some fine plot, or pensive or other emotion. But, strange as it may sound at first, I will say there is something striking far deeper and towering far higher than those themes for the best elements of modern song.

Just as all the old imaginative works rest, after their kind, on long trains of presuppositions, often entirely unmention'd by themselves, yet supplying the most important bases of them, and without which they could have had no reason for being, so *Leaves of Grass*, before a line was written, presupposed something different from any other, and, as it stands, is the result of such presupposition. I should say, indeed, it were useless to attempt reading the book without first carefully tallying that preparatory background and quality in the mind. Think of the United States to-day—the

Leaves of Grass is the result of a presupposition, the nature of the United States in 1850.

facts of these thirty-eight or forty empires solder'd in one—sixty or seventy millions of equals with their lives, their passions, their future—these incalculable, modern, American, seething multitudes around us, of which we are inseparable parts! Think, in comparison, of the petty environage and limited area of the poets of past or present Europe, no matter how great their genius. Think of the absence and ignorance in all cases hitherto, of the multitudinousness, vitality, and the unprecedented stimulants of to-day and here. It almost seems as if a poetry with cosmic and dynamic features of magnitude and limitlessness suitable to the human soul were never possible before. It is certain that a poetry of absolute faith and equality for the use of the democratic masses never was.

Never before was a poetry with cosmic and dynamic features possible, never poetry for the democratic masses.

In estimating first-class song, a sufficient Nationality, or, on the other hand, what may be call'd the negative and lack of it, (as in Goethe's case, it sometimes seems to me,) is often, if not always, the first element. One needs only a little penetration to see, at more or less removes, the material facts of their country and radius, with the coloring of the moods of humanity at the time, and its gloomy or hopeful prospects, behind all poets and each poet, and forming their birthmarks. I know very well that my "Leaves" could not possibly have emerged or been fashion'd or completed, from any other era than the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, nor any other land than democratic America, and from the absolute triumph of the National Union arms.

Leaves of Grass *was an impossibility until the latter half of the nineteenth century.*

And whether my friends claim it for me or not, I know well enough, too, that in respect to pictorial talent, dramatic situations, and especially in verbal melody and all the conventional technique of poetry, not only the

Poets have written greater poetry than I could ever write.

divine works that to-day stand ahead in the world's reading but dozens more, transcend (some of them immeasurably transcend) all I have done, or could do. But it seem'd to me, as the objects in Nature, the themes of aestheticism, and all special exploitations of the mind and soul, involve not only their own inherent quality, but the quality, just as inherent and important, of *their point of view,* the time had come to reflect all themes and things, old and new, in the lights thrown on them by the advent of America and democracy—to chant those themes through the utterance of one, not only the grateful and reverent legatee of the past, but the born child of the New World—to illustrate all through the genesis and ensemble of to-day; and that such illustration and ensemble are the chief demands of America's prospective imaginative literature. Not to carry out, in the approved style, some choice plot of fortune or misfortune, or fancy, or fine thoughts, or incidents, or courtesies—all of which has been done overwhelmingly and well, probably never to be excell'd—but that while in such aesthetic presentation of objects, passions, plots, thoughts, etc., our lands and days do not want, and probably will never have, anything better than they already possess from the bequests of the past, it will remain to be said that there is even towards all those a subjective and contemporary point of view appropriate to ourselves alone, and to our new genius and environments, different from anything hitherto; and that such conception of current or gone-by life and art is for us the only means of their assimilation consistent with the Western World.

The time has come for the advent of America and democracy to be chanted by the born child of the New World.

We do not want anything greater than the bequests of the past.

The western world with its new genius and environments has a point of view appropriate to America.

Indeed, and anyhow, to put it specifically, has not the time arrived when, (if it must be plainly said, for democratic America's sake, if for no other) there must imperatively come a readjustment of the whole theory and nature of poetry? The question is important, and I may turn the argument over and repeat it: Does not the best thought of our day and Republic conceive of a birth and spirit of song superior to anything past or present? To the effectual and moral consolidation of our lands (already, as materially establish'd, the greatest factors in known history, and far, far greater through what they prelude and necessitate, and are to be in future)—to conform with and build on the concrete realities and theories of the universe furnish'd by science, and henceforth the only irrefragable basis for anything, verse included—to root both influences in the emotional and imaginative action of the modern time, and dominate all that precedes or opposes them—is not either a radical advance and step forward, or a new verteber of the best song indispensable?

The time has come for a readjustment of the theory and nature of poetry.

The realities and theories of the universe furnished by science must be rooted in the emotional and imaginative action of modern times.

A radical advance may be indispensable.

The New World receives with joy the poems of the antique, with European feudalism's rich fund of epics, plays, ballads—seeks not in the least to deaden or displace those voices from our ear and area—holds them indeed as indispensable studies, influences, records, comparisons. But though the dawn-dazzle of the sun of literature is in those poems for us of to-day—though perhaps the best parts of current character in nations, social groups, or any man's or woman's individuality, Old World or New, are from them—and though if I were ask'd to name the most precious bequest to current American civilization from all the hitherto ages, I am not sure but I would name those old and less

old songs ferried hither from east and west—some serious words and debits remain; some acrid considerations demand a hearing. Of the great poems receiv'd from abroad and from the ages, and to-day enveloping and penetrating America, is there one that is consistent with these United States, or essentially applicable to them as they are and are to be? Is there one whose underlying basis is not a denial and insult to democracy? What a comment it forms, anyhow, on this era of literary fulfilment, with the splendid day-rise of science and resuscitation of history, that our chief religious and poetical works are not our own, nor adapted to our light, but have been furnish'd by far-back ages out of their arrière and darkness, or, at most, twilight dimness! What is there in those works that so imperiously and scornfully dominates all our advanced civilization and culture?

The great poems from abroad are a denial of democracy.

Even Shakespeare, who so suffuses current letters and art (which indeed have in most degrees grown out of him,) belongs essentially to the buried past. Only he holds the proud distinction for certain important phases of that past, of being the loftiest of the singers life has yet given voice to. All, however, relate to and rest upon conditions, standards, politics, sociologies, ranges of belief, that have been quite eliminated from the Eastern hemisphere, and never existed at all in the Western. As authoritative types of song they belong in America just about as much as the persons and institutes they depict. True, it may be said, the emotional, moral, and aesthetic natures of humanity have not radically changed—that in these the old poems apply to our times and all times, irrespective of date; and that they are of incalculable value as pictures of the past. I willingly make those admissions and to their

Shakespeare and other singers belong to the buried past. Although their poems portray humanity, yet Whitman holds to his thesis: they do not express America.

fullest extent; then advance the points herewith as of serious, even paramount importance.

I have indeed put on record elsewhere my reverence and eulogy for those never-to-be-excell'd poetic bequests, and their indescribable preciousness as heirlooms for America. Another and separate point must now be candidly stated. If I had not stood before those poems with uncover'd head, fully aware of their colossal grandeur and beauty of form and spirit, I could not have written *Leaves of Grass*. My verdict and conclusions as illustrated in its pages are arrived at through the temper and inculcation of the old works as much as through anything else—perhaps more than through anything else. As America fully and fairly construed is the legitimate result and evolutionary outcome of the past, so I would dare to claim for my verse. Without stopping to qualify the averment, the Old World has had the poems of myths, fictions, feudalism, conquest, caste, dynastic wars, and splendid exceptional characters and affairs, which have been great; but the New World needs the poems of realities and science and of the democratic average and basic equality, which shall be greater. In the centre of all, and object of all, stands the Human Being, towards whose heroic and spiritual evolution poems and everything directly or indirectly tend, Old World or New.

Whitman acknowledges his debt to the literature of past ages.

The new world needs poems of realities, science, the democratic average, and basic equality.

CHAPTER VII

★

HOW TO READ LITERATURE: THE SHORT-STORY

> Who reads
> Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
> A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
> Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
> Deep versed in books, and shallow in himself.
> —*Paradise Regained*
> by John Milton

THE essential characteristics of any kind of writing give the discerning reader clues as to how it should be read. The more a reader knows about the techniques of writing novels, short stories, plays, poems, essays, the better able he will be to adjust his reading procedures to the ways of the writer. The reader may never write for publication, but he should be an intelligent consumer of books, just as one studies music in order that he may become an intelligent listener. One is fortunate if he can associate with those who have the power to communicate their intellectual and artistic pleasure in books, but the intelligent person is antagonistic toward rhapsodies about masterpieces. He does not want to be presented with a *fait accompli;* rather he prefers to be led into the living presence of men and women in books and be helped to arrive at understanding and judgment and appreciation. He wants no second-hand opinions. Probably literature cannot be taught. But a real teacher can introduce a student to the vital presence that lives in a great book. An intelligent reader is not content with mere liking or disliking of a literary com-

position. He is interested in foundations for his opinions, his judgments, his satisfactions, his ability or inability to accept what he reads. Like Saint Paul, the cultivated reader wants a reason for the faith that is in him. According to Elizabeth Drew*:

> The palate is a very personal possession, and the sincere enjoyment of literature depends upon the satisfaction of the personal needs of each of us: no amount of argument can alter that. Age and temperament and personal experience are inevitably and inextricably bound up in the responses of each individual to every work of literature he reads.

In times past, critics have discussed literature in terms of literary types, but today they are inclined to interpret literature in terms of the author's purpose and the effect of literature on the reader. All creative work that uses language as its medium can be divided into two classes. Language-composition that is utilitarian or moral, whose materials are facts, De Quincey's literature of knowledge, is concerned chiefly with external reality. The selections in Chapter VI (pp. 86-122) furnish illustrations of this kind of writing. It is so objective that it provides comparatively little opportunity for the writer to impress his individuality on what he writes. His aim is to enlighten the reader.

Another body of writing, the product of the creative imagination, novels, stories, plays, essays, poetry—all should be called poetry, if we consider the origin of the word *poetry*; it is derived from the Greek verb, *poiein*, to make. But the word *poetry* is usually reserved for a subdivision of creative writing, *belles lettres*, De Quincey's literature of power. The writers, or composers, are free to associate ideas, to present images, to do whatever in the wisdom of their aesthetic sense and creative mood will persuade the reader or listener to respond to the writer's thoughts and emotions and to re-create the writer's experience, as far as the reader's experience permits. The writer of *belles lettres* attempts, with his subjective approach, to enlist the reader's whole being in the act of reading. The writer of factual materials is objective.

There is a body of writing that overlaps these two categories, for some writers of factual material can appeal to the reader's under-

* From *The Enjoyment of Literature* by Elizabeth Drew. Copyright, 1935, by W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.

standing and at the same time stimulate his imagination and stir his emotions by the magic of their words, the rhythm of their prose, and the beauty of their imagery. Muir's story of the thousand-year-old pine, Beebe's explorations of the floor of the ocean, Hudson's visions of South America, Burroughs, Huxley, and others have invested facts with the magic charm of the creative artist.

The American reading public reads the short-story with eagerness, varying greatly in the way in which it is read. Some readers gulp down the story, curious to know what happens next, content if the story proves absorbing and reaches a striking climax.

In such reading, analysis and reflection have no part; the reader does not become the critical reader, growing in discrimination and discernment. In this chapter are included four stories with comments that focus on the characteristics of each. The first is *Young Man Axelbrod* by Sinclair Lewis; the second is *Sleepy* by Anton Chekhov, one of the great Russian writers; the third story was written by the ill-fated Ambrose Bierce, who vanished years ago into Mexico; the fourth story, *To Build a Fire*, is an example of Jack London's artistic accomplishment when he was at the height of his power. The four stories differ greatly, yet have much in common. All are concerned with human beings in conflict, which is the essence of the short-story. Without the element of conflict, struggle, forces in collision, there can be no short-story.

The critical reader, aware of this characteristic, reads all short-stories with a mental alertness for the conflict. He asks himself: what is the outcome of the struggle? What is the nature of the impact on the characters? A critic of generations ago discussed conflict in terms of protagonist and antagonist: one who is attacked and one who attacks. The situation demands a struggle.

In *Young Man Axelbrod*, Knute Axelbrod from the sagebrush plains, later reinforced by Gilbert Washburn at Yale, stands for one of the opposing forces; and arrayed against him were the Ray Gribble's, Blevins, Ph.D., and the young ruthless element at Yale, unaware of its ruthlessness. It is a story of poignant suffering. The author's sympathies are clearly with Young Man Axelbrod and the reader's are, too. In fact, the reader rejoices when Washburn allies himself with Axelbrod against the forces of philistinism. With that alliance, spiritual victory for Axelbrod is assured. The perceptive

reader is keenly aware of the author's fierce irony and his militant wrath against injustice. The story, one of the greatest in American literature, meets all the criteria of the short-story: rapid action, definite progression toward a climax, an atmosphere charged with emotion, antagonistic forces in conflict that create a dramatic situation, characters sharply defined—a composition that by its very artistry insures intelligent and pleasurable reading.

But it is not enough to witness a struggle. Why the struggle? What is at stake? To answer these questions is to define the theme that animates the story and justifies the struggle. It narrows down to our wondering what specifically was Sinclair Lewis's purpose in writing this story. Various readers will offer many answers, but probably all will agree that Lewis hated with all his soul unkindness, pretense, smug self-complacency, artificiality, dullness and stupidity that masquerades as superiority. He created Axelbrod who was the embodiment of the opposite of these traits. Arrayed against him are faculty members of Yale and students who exemplify the negative qualities. The author draws his sword against hypocrisy in defence of genuine worth. Axelbrod and Lewis win. Yale is defeated but is unaware of the fact. Lewis, the artist, knows that Axelbrod cannot stay at Yale after his one perfect experience; no artist risks an anticlimax. The story achieves organic unity; it ends as it began. Axelbrod came out of the West; he returns to the West. Like a *deus ex machina*, Gil Washburn helped Axelbrod experience the miracle he had longed for during his sixty-five years.

The pleasure of the reader is enhanced if he understands:

1. *the nature of the conflict,*
2. *the characters in the two rival camps,*
3. *the author's theme or thesis,*
4. *the organic unity of the story,*

and if he experiences the emotional stress of the action.

YOUNG MAN AXELBROD*

by Sinclair Lewis

The cottonwood is a tree of a slovenly and plebeian habit. Its woolly wisps turn gray the lawns and engender neighborhood

* From *Selected Short Stories* by Sinclair Lewis. Copyright, 1917, by Sinclair Lewis, reprinted by permission of Doubleday & Company.

hostilities about our town. Yet it is a mighty tree, a refuge and an inspiration; the sun flickers in its towering foliage, whence the tattoo of locusts enlivens our dusty summer afternoons. From the wheat country out to the sagebrush plains between the buttes and the Yellowstone, it is the cottonwood that keeps a little grateful shade for sweating homesteaders.

In Joralemon we called Knute Axelbrod "Old Cottonwood." As a matter of fact, the name was derived not so much from the quality of the man as from the wide grove about his gaunt white house and red barn. He made a comely row of trees on each side of the country road, so that a humble, daily sort of man, driving beneath them in his lumber wagon, might fancy himself lord of a private avenue. And at sixty-five Knute was like one of his own cottonwoods, his roots deep in the soil, his trunk weathered by rain and blizzard and baking August noons, his crown spread to the wide horizon of day and the enormous sky of a prairie night.

This immigrant was an American even in speech. Save for a weakness about his j's and w's, he spoke the twangy Yankee English of the land. He was the more American because, in his native Scandinavia, he had dreamed of America as a land of light. Always, through disillusion and weariness, he beheld America as the world's nursery for justice, for broad, fair towns, and eager talk; and always he kept a young soul that dared to desire beauty.

As a lad Knute Axelbrod had wished to be a famous scholar, to learn the ease of foreign tongues, the romance of history, to unfold in the graciousness of the wise books. When he first came to America he worked in a sawmill all day and studied all evening. He mastered enough book learning to teach district school for two terms; then when he was only eighteen, a great-hearted pity for faded Lena Wesselius moved him to marry her. Gay enough, doubtless, was their hike by prairie schooner to new farm lands, but Knute was promptly caught in a net of poverty and family. From eighteen to fifty-eight he was always snatching children away from death or the farm away from mortgages.

He had to be content—and generously content he was—with the second-hand glory of his children's success and, for himself, with pilfered hours of reading—that reading of big, thick, dismal volumes of history and economics which the lone, mature learner chooses. Without ever losing his desire for strange cities and the dignity of towers, he stuck to his farm. He acquired a half-section,

free from debt, fertile, well-stocked, adorned with a cement silo, a chicken-run, a new windmill. He became comfortable, secure, and then he was ready, it seemed, to die; for at sixty-three his work was done, and he was unneeded and alone.

His wife was dead. His sons had scattered afar, one a dentist in Fargo, another a farmer in the Golden Valley. He had turned over his farm to his daughter and son-in-law. They had begged him to live with them, but Knute refused.

"No," he said, "you must learn to stand on your own feet. I vill not give you the farm. You pay me four hundred dollars a year rent, and I live on that and vatch you from my hill."

On a rise beside the lone cottonwood which he loved best of all his trees, Knute built a tar-paper shack, and he "bached it": cooked his meals, made his bed—sometimes, sat in the sun, read many books from the Joralemon library, and began to feel that he was free of the yoke of citizenship which he had borne all his life.

For hours at a time he sat on a backless kitchen chair before the shack, a wide-shouldered man, white-bearded, motionless; a seer despite his grotesquely baggy trousers, his collarless shirt. He looked across the miles of stubble to the steeple of the jack-rabbit Forks church and meditated upon the uses of life. At first he could not break the rigidity of habit. He rose at five, found work in cleaning his cabin and cultivating his garden, had dinner exactly at twelve, and went to bed by afterglow. But little by little he discovered that he could be irregular without being arrested. He stayed abed till seven or even eight. He got a large, deliberate tortoise-shell cat, and played games with it; let it lap milk upon the table, called it the Princess, and confided to it that he had a "sneaking idee" that men were fools to work so hard. Around this coatless old man, his stained waistcoat flapping about a huge torso, in a shanty of rumpled bed and pine table covered with sheets of daubed newspaper, hovered all the passionate aspiration of youth and the dreams of ancient beauty.

He began to take long walks by night. In his necessitous life, night had ever been a period of heavy slumber in close rooms. Now he discovered the mystery of the dark; saw the prairies wide-flung and misty beneath the moon; heard the voices of grass and cottonwoods and drowsy birds. He tramped for miles. His boots were dew-soaked, but he did not heed. He stopped upon

hillocks, shyly threw wide his arms, and stood worshiping the naked, slumbering land.

These excursions he tried to keep secret, but they were bruited abroad. Neighbors, good, decent fellows with no nonsense about walking in the dew at night, when they were returning late from town, drunk, lashing their horses, and flinging whisky bottles from their racing democrat wagons, saw him, and they spread the tiding that Old Cottonwood was "getting nutty since he give up his farm to that son-in-law of his and retired. Seen the old codger wandering around at midnight. Wish I had his chance to sleep. Wouldn't catch me out in the night air."

Any rural community from Todd Center to Seringapatam is resentful of any person who varies from its standard and is morbidly fascinated by any hint of madness. The countryside began to spy on Knute Axelbrod, to ask him questions, and to stare from the road at his shack. He was sensitively aware of it, and inclined to be surly to inquisitive acquaintances. Doubtless that was the beginning of his great pilgrimage.

As a part of the general wild license of his new life—really, he once roared at that startled cat, the Princess, "By gollies! I ain't going to brush my teeth tonight. All my life I've brushed 'em, and alvays vanted to skip a time vunce"—Knute took considerable pleasure in degenerating in his taste in scholarship. He wilfully declined to finish *The Conquest of Mexico*, and began to read light novels borrowed from the Joralemon library. So he rediscovered the lands of dancing and light wines, which all his life he had desired. Some economics and history he did read, but every evening he would stretch out in his buffalo-horn chair, his feet on the cot and the Princess in his lap, and invade Zenda or fall in love with Trilby.

Among the novels, he chanced upon a highly optimistic story of Yale in which a worthy young man "earned his way through" college, stroked the crew, won Phi Beta Kappa, and had the most entertaining, yet moral, conversations on or adjacent to "the dear old fence."

As a result of this chronicle, at about three o'clock one morning when Knute Axelbrod was sixty-four years of age, he decided that he would go to college! All his life he had wanted to. Why not do it?

When he awoke in the morning he was not so sure about it

as when he had gone to sleep. He saw himself as ridiculous, a ponderous, oldish man among clean-limbed youths, like a dusty cottonwood among silver birches. But for months he wrestled and played with that idea of a great pilgrimage to the Mount of Muses; for he really supposed all college students, except for the wealthy idlers, burned to acquire learning. He pictured Harvard and Yale and Princeton as ancient groves set with marble temples, before which large groups of Grecian youths talked gently about astronomy and good government. In his picture they never cut classes or ate.

With a longing for music and books and graciousness such as the most ambitious boy could never comprehend, this thick-faced prairie farmer dedicated himself to beauty, and defied the unconquerable power of approaching old age. He sent for college catalogues and schoolbooks, and diligently began to prepare himself for college.

He found Latin irregular verbs and the whimsicalities of algebra fiendish. They had nothing to do with actual life as he had lived it. But he mastered them; he studied twelve hours a day, as once he plodded through eighteen hours a day in the hayfield. With history and English literature he had comparatively little trouble; already he knew much of them from his recreative reading. From German neighbors he had picked up enough Plattdeutsch to make German easy. The trick of study began to come back to him from his small schoolteaching of forty-five years before. He began to believe that he could really put it through. He kept assuring himself that in college, with rare and sympathetic instructors to help him, there would not be this baffling search, this nervous strain.

But the unreality of the things he studied did disillusion him, and he tired of his new game. He kept it up chiefly because all his life he had kept up onerous labor without any taste for it. Toward the autumn of the second year of his eccentric life he no longer believed that he would ever go to college.

Then a busy little grocer stopped him on the street in Joralemon and quizzed him about his studies, to the delight of the informal club which always loafs at the corner of the hotel.

Knute was silent, but dangerously angry. He remembered just in time how he had once laid wrathful hands upon a hired man, and somehow the man's collarbone had been broken. He turned

away and walked home, seven miles, still boiling. He picked up the Princess, and, with her mewing on his shoulder, tramped out again to enjoy the sunset.

He stopped at a reedy slough. He gazed at a hopping plover without seeing it. He plucked at his beard. Suddenly he cried:

"I am going to college. It opens next week. I t'ink that I can pass the examinations."

Two days later he had moved the Princess and his sticks of furniture to his son-in-law's house, had bought a new slouch hat, a celluloid collar, and a solemn suit of black, had wrestled with God in prayer through all of a star-clad night, and had taken the train for Minneapolis, on the way to New Haven.

While he stared out of the car window, Knute was warning himself that the millionaires' sons would make fun of him. Perhaps they would haze him. He bade himself avoid all these sons of Belial and cleave to his own people, those who "earned their way through."

At Chicago he was afraid with a great fear of the lightning flashes that the swift crowds made on his retina, the batteries of ranked motorcars that charged at him. He prayed, and ran for his train to New York. He came at last to New Haven.

Not with gibing rudeness, but with politely quizzical eyebrows, Yale received him, led him through entrance examinations, which, after sweaty plowing with the pen, he barely passed, and found for him a roommate. The roommate was a large-browed, soft white grub named Ray Gribble, who had been teaching school in New England, and seemed chiefly to desire college training so that he might make more money as a teacher. Ray Gribble was a hustler; he instantly got work tutoring the awkward son of a steel man, and for board he waited on table.

He was Knute's chief acquaintance. Knute tried to fool himself into thinking he liked the grub, but Ray couldn't keep his damp hands off the old man's soul. He had the skill of a professional exhorter of young men in finding Knute's motives, and when he discover that Knute had a hidden desire to dabble in gay, polite literature, Ray said in a shocked way:

"Strikes me a man like you, that's getting old, ought to be thinking more about saving your soul than about all these frills. You leave this poetry and stuff to these foreigners and artists,

and you stick to Latin and math and the Bible. I tell you, I've taught school, and I've learned by experience."

With Ray Gribble, Knute lived grubbily, an existence of torn comforters and a smelly lamp, of lexicons and logarithm tables. No leisurely loafing by fireplaces was theirs. They roomed in West Divinity, where gather the theologues, the lesser sort of law students, a whimsical genius or two, and a horde of unplaced freshmen and "scrub seniors."

Knute was shockingly disappointed, but he stuck to his room because outside of it he was afraid. He was a grotesque figure, and he knew it, a white-polled giant squeezed into a small seat in a classroom, listening to instructors younger than his own sons. Once he tried to sit on the fence. No one but "ringers" sat on the fence any more, and at the sight of him trying to look athletic and young, two upperclassmen snickered, and he sneaked away.

He came to hate Ray Gribble and his voluble companions of the submerged tenth of the class, the hewers of tutorial wood. It is doubtless safer to mock the flag than to question that best-established tradition of our democracy—that those who "earn their way through" college are necessarily stronger, braver, and more assured of success than the weaklings who talk by the fire. Every college story presents such a moral. But tremblingly the historian submits that Knute discovered that waiting on table did not make lads more heroic than did football or happy loafing. Fine fellows, cheerful and fearless, were many of the boys who "earned their way," and able to talk to richer classmates without fawning; but just as many of them assumed an abject respectability as the most convenient pose. They were pickers-up of unconsidered trifles; they toadied to the classmates whom they tutored; they wriggled before the faculty committee on scholarships; they looked pious at Dwight Hall prayer meetings to make an impression on the serious-minded; and they drank one glass of beer at Jake's to show the light-minded that they meant nothing offensive by their piety. In revenge for cringing to the insolent athletes whom they tutored, they would, when safe among their own kind, yammer about the "lack of democracy in colleges today." Not that they were so indiscreet as to do anything about it. They lacked the stuff of really rebellious souls. Knute listened to them and marveled. They sounded like a

young hired man talking behind his barn at harvest time.

This submerged tenth hated the dilettantes of the class even more than they hated the bloods. Against one Gilbert Washburn, a rich esthete with more manner than any freshman ought to have, they raged righteously. They spoke of seriousness and industry till Knute, who might once have desired to know lads like Washburn, felt ashamed of himself as a wicked, wasteful old man.

With the friends of his roommate began Knute's series of disillusions. Humbly though he sought, he found no inspiration and no comradeship. He was the freak of the class, and aside from the submerged tenth, his classmates were afraid of being "queered" by being seen with him.

As he was still powerful, one who could take up a barrel of pork on his knees, he tried to find friendship among the athletes. He sat at Yale Field, watching the football tryouts, and tried to get acquainted with the candidates. They stared at him and answered his questions grudgingly—beefy youths who in their simple-hearted way showed that they considered him plain crazy.

The place itself began to lose the haze of magic through which he had first seen it. Earth is earth, whether one sees it in Camelot or Joralemon or on the Yale campus—or possibly even in the Harvard yard! The buildings ceased to be temples to Knute; they became structures of brick or stone, filled with young men who lounged at windows and watched him amusedly as he tried to slip by.

The Gargantuan hall of Commons became a tri-daily horror because at the table where he dined were two youths, who, having uncommonly penetrating minds, discerned that Knute had a beard, and courageously told the world about it. One of them, named Atchison, was a superior person, very industrious and scholarly, glib in mathematics and manners. He despised Knute's lack of definite purpose in coming to college. The other was a playboy, a wit and a stealer of street signs, who had a wonderful sense for a subtle jest; and his references to Knute's beard shook the table with jocund mirth three times a day. So these youths of gentle birth drove the shambling, wistful old man away from the Commons, and thereafter he ate at the lunch counter at the Black Cat.

Lacking the stimulus of friendship, it was the harder for

Knute to keep up the strain of studying the long assignments. What had been a week's pleasure reading in his shack was now thrown at him as a day's task. But he would not have minded the toil if he could have found one as young as himself. They were all so dreadfully old, the money earners, the serious laborers at athletics, the instructors who worried over their life work of putting marks in a class-record book.

Then, on a sore, bruised day, Knute did meet one who was young.

Knute had heard that the professor who was the idol of the college had berated the too-earnest lads in his Browning class, and insisted that they read *Alice in Wonderland.* Knute floundered dustily about in a second-hand bookshop till he found an *Alice*, and he brought it home to read over his lunch of a hot-dog sandwich. Something in the grave absurdity of the book appealed to him, and he was chuckling over it when Ray Gribble came into the room and glanced at the reader.

"Huh!" said Mr. Gribble.

"That's a fine, funny book," said Knute.

"Huh! *Alice in Wonderland!* I've heard of it. Silly nonsense. Why don't you read something really fine, like Shakespeare or *Paradise Lost?*"

"Vell—" said Knute, but that was all he could find to say. With Ray Gribble's glassy eye on him, he could no longer roll and roar with the book. He wondered if indeed he ought not to be reading Milton's pompous anthropological misconceptions. He went unhappily out to an early history class, ably conducted by Blevins, Ph.D.

Knute admired Blevins, Ph.D. He was so tubbed and eyeglassed and terribly right. But most of Blevins' lambs did not like Blevins. They said he was a "crank." They read newspapers in his class and covertly kicked one another.

In the smug, plastered classroom, his arm leaning heavily on the broad table-arm of his chair, Knute tried not to miss one of Blevins' sardonic proofs that the correct date of the second marriage of Themistocles was two years and seven days later than the date assigned by that illiterate ass, Frutari of Padua. Knute admired young Blevins' performance, and he felt virtuous in application to these hard, unnonsensical facts.

He became aware that certain lewd fellows of the lesser sort were playing poker just behind him. His prairie-trained ear caught whispers of "Two to dole," and "Raise you two beans." Knute revolved, and frowned upon these mockers of sound learning. As he turned back he was aware that the offenders were chuckling, and continuing their game. He saw Blevins as merely a boy. He was sorry for him. He would do the boy a good turn.

When the class was over he hung about Blevins' desk till the other students had clattered out. He rumbled:

"Say, Professor, you're a fine fellow. I do something for you. If any of the boys make themselves a nuisance, you yust call on me, and I spank the son of a guns."

Blevins, Ph.D., spoke in a manner of culture and nastiness:

"Thanks so much, Axelbrod, but I don't fancy that will ever be necessary. I am supposed to be a reasonably good disciplinarian. Good day. Oh, one moment. There's something I've been wishing to speak to you about. I do wish you wouldn't try quite so hard to show off whenever I call on you during quizzes. You answer at such needless length, and you smile as though there were something highly amusing about me. I'm quite willing to have you regard me as a humorous figure, privately, but there are certain classroom conventions, you know, certain little conventions."

"Why, Professor!" wailed Knute. "I never make fun of you! I didn't know I smile. If I do, I guess it's yust because I am so glad when my stupid old head gets the lesson good."

"Well, well, that's very gratifying, I'm sure. And if you will be a little more careful—"

Blevins, Ph.D, smiled a toothy, frozen smile, and trotted off to the Graduates' Club, to be witty about old Knute and his way of saying "yust," while in the deserted classroom Knute sat chill, an old man and doomed. Through the windows came the light of Indian summer; clean, boyish cries rose from the campus. But the lover of autumn smoothed his baggy sleeve, stared at the blackboard, and there saw only the gray of October stubble about his distant shack. As he pictured the college watching him, secretly making fun of him and his smile, he was now faint

and ashamed, now bull-angry. He was lonely for his cat, his fine chair of buffalo horns, the sunny doorstep of his shack, and the understanding land. He had been in college for about one month.

Before he left the classroom he stepped behind the instructor's desk and looked at an imaginary class.

"I might have stood there as a prof if I could have come earlier," he said softly to himself.

Calmed by the liquid autumn gold that flowed through the streets, he walked out Whitney Avenue toward the butte-like hill of East Rock. He observed the caress of the light upon the scarped rock, heard the delicate music of leaves, breathed in air pregnant with tales of old New England. He exulted:

"I could write poetry now if I yust—if I yust could write poetry!"

He climbed to the top of East Rock, whence he could see the Yale buildings like the towers of Oxford, Long Island Sound, and the white glare of Long Island itself beyond the water. He marveled that Knute Axelbrod of the cottonwood country was looking across an arm of the Atlantic to New York State.

He noticed a freshman on a bench at the edge of the rock, and he became irritated. The freshman was Gilbert Washburn, the snob, the dilettante of whom Ray Gribble had once said: "That guy is the disgrace of the class. He doesn't go out for anything, high stand or Dwight Hall or anything else. Thinks he's so doggone much better than the rest of the fellows that he doesn't associate with anybody. Thinks he's literary, they say, and yet he doesn't even heel the 'lit,' like the regular literary fellows! Got no time for a loafing, moonin' snob like that."

As Knute stared at the unaware Gil, whose profile was fine in outline against the sky, he was terrifically public-spirited and disapproving and that sort of moral thing. Though Gil was much too well-dressed, he seemed moodily discontented.

"What he needs is to work in a thrashing-crew and sleep in the hay," grumbled Knute almost in the virtuous manner of Gribble. "Then he vould know when he was vell off, and not like he had the earache. Pff!"

Gil Washburn rose, trailed toward Knute, glanced at him, hesitated, sat down on Knute's bench.

"Great view!" he said. His smile was eager.

That smile symbolized to Knute all the art of life he had come to college to find. He tumbled out of his moral attitude with ludicrous haste, and every wrinkle of his weathered face creased deep as he answered:

"Yes, I t'ink the Acropolis must be like this here."

"Say, look here, Axelbrod, I've been thinking about you."

"Yas?"

"We ought to know each other. We two are the class scandal. We came here to dream, and these busy little goats like Atchison and Giblets, or whatever your roommate's name is, think we're fools not to go out for marks. You may not agree with me, but I've decided that you and I are precisely alike."

"What makes you t'ink I come here to dream?" bristled Knute.

"Oh, I used to sit near you at Commons and hear you try to quell jolly old Atchison whenever he got busy discussing the reasons for coming to college. That old, moth-eaten topic! I wonder if Cain and Abel didn't discuss it at the Eden Agricultural College. You know, Able the mark-grabber, very pious and high stand, and Cain wanting to read poetry."

"Yes," said Knute, "and I guess Prof. Adam say, 'Cain, don't you read this poetry, it von't help you in algebry.' "

"Of course. Say, wonder if you'd like to look at this volume of Musset I was sentimental enough to lug up here today. Picked it up when I was abroad last year."

From his pocket Gil drew such a book as Knute had never seen before, a slender volume, in a strange language, bound in hand-tooled, crushed levant, an effeminate bibelot over which the prairie farmer gasped with luxurious pleasure. The book almost vanished in his big hands. With a timid forefinger he stroked the levant, ran through the leaves.

"I can't read it, but that's the kind of book I alvays t'ought there must be some like it," he sighed.

"Let me read you a little. It's French poetry."

Gil read aloud. He made of the alien verses a music which satisfied Knute's sixty-five years of longing for he had never known what.

"That's—that's fine," he said.

"Listen!" cried Gil. "Ysaye is playing up at Hartford tonight.

Let's go hear him. We'll trolley up, make it in plenty of time. Tried to get some of the fellows to come, but they thought I was a nut."

What an Ysaye was, Knute Axelbrod had no notion, but "Sure!" he boomed.

When they got to Hartford they found that between them they had just enough money to get dinner, hear Ysaye from gallery seats, and return only as far as Meriden.

At Meriden, Gil suggested:

"Let's walk back to New Haven, then. Can you make it?"

Knute had no knowledge as to whether it was four miles or forty back to the campus, but "Sure!" he said. For the last few months he had been noticing that, despite his bulk, he had to be careful, but tonight he would have flown.

In the music of Ysaye, the first real musician he had ever heard, Knute had found all the incredible things of which he had slowly been reading in William Morris and *Idylls of the King*. Tall knights he had beheld, and slim princesses in white samite, the misty gates of forlorn towns, and the glory of the chivalry that never was.

They did walk, roaring down the road beneath the October moon, stopping to steal apples and to exclaim over silvered fane-dog. It was Gil who talked, and Knute who listened, for the most part; but Knute was lured into tales of the pioneer days, of blizzards, of harvesting, and of the first flame of the green wheat. Regarding the Atchisons and Gribbles of the class, both of them were youthfully bitter and supercilious. They were wandering minstrels, Gilbert the troubadour with his man-at-arms.

They reached the campus at about five in the morning.

Fumbling for words that would express his feeling, Knute stammered:

"Vell, it vas fine. I go to bed now and I dream about—"

"Bed? Rats! Never believe in winding up a party when it's going strong. Too few good parties. Besides, it's only the shank of the evening. Besides, we're hungry. Besides—oh, besides! Wait here a second. I'm going up to my room to get some money, and we'll have some eats. Wait! Please do!"

Knute would have waited all night. He had lived sixty-five years and traveled fifteen hundred miles and endured Ray Gribble to find Gil Washburn.

Policemen wondered to see the celluloid-collared old man and the expensive-looking boy rolling arm in arm down Chapel Street in search of a restaurant suitable to poets. They were all closed.

"The Ghetto will be awake by now," said Gil. "We'll go buy some eats and take 'em up to my room. I've got some tea there."

Knute shouldered through dark streets beside him as naturally as though he had always been a night-hawk, with an aversion to anything as rustic as beds. Down on Oak Street, a place of low shops, smoky lights, and alley mouths, they found the slum already astir. Gil contrived to purchase boxed biscuits, cream cheese, chicken loaf, a bottle of cream. While Gil was chaffering, Knute stared out into the streets milkily lighted by wavering gas and the first feebleness of coming day; he gazed upon Kosher signs and advertisements in Russian letters, shawled women and bearded rabbis; and as he looked he gathered contentment which he could never lose. He had traveled abroad tonight.

The room of Gil Washburn was all the useless, pleasant things Knute wanted it to be. There were more of Gil's Paris days in it than of his freshmanhood: cloisonné on the mantelpiece, Persian rugs, a silver tea service, etchings, and books. Knute Axelbrod gazed in satisfaction. Vast-bearded, sunk in an easy chair, he clucked amiably while Gil lighted a fire and spread a wicker table.

Over supper they spoke of great men and heroic ideals. It was good talk, and not unspiced with lively references to Gribble and Atchison and Blevins, all asleep now in their correct beds. Gil read snatches of Stevenson and Anatole France; then at last he read his own poetry.

It does not matter whether that poetry was good or bad. To Knute it was a miracle to find one who actually wrote it.

The talk grew slow and they began to yawn. Knute was sensitive to the lowered key of their Indian-summer madness, and he hastily rose. As he said good-bye he felt as though he had but to sleep a little while and return to this unending night of romance.

But he came out of the dormitory upon day. It was six-thirty of the morning, with a still, hard light upon red-brick walls.

"I can go to his room plenty times now; I find my friend,"

Knute said. He held tight the volume of Musset, which Gil had begged him to take.

As he started to walk the few steps to West Divinity, Knute felt very tired. By daylight the adventure seemed more and more incredible.

As he entered the dormitory he sighed heavily:

"Age and youth, I guess they can't team together long." As he mounted the stairs, he said: "If I saw the boy again, he vould get tired of me. I tell him all I got to say." And as he opened his door, he added: "This is what I come to college for—for this one night; I live for it sixty-five years. I go avay before I spoil it."

He wrote a note to Gil, and began to pack his telescope. He did not even wake Ray Gribble, sonorously sleeping in the stale air.

At five that afternoon, on the day coach of a west-bound train, an old man sat smiling. A lasting content in his eyes, and in his hands, a small book in French, though the curious fact is that this man could not read French.

Another short-story that takes its place among notable fiction is *Sleepy* by Anton Chekhov. Like the American story just discussed, *Sleepy* embodies the characteristics that the experienced reader expects in the modern short-story. The technique of the short-story indicates the appropriate reading approach.

Sleepy presents more complexity than *Young Man Axelbrod.* A child commits murder; yet the author handles the plot so skillfully that the reader's sympathy is enlisted on the side of the child, although she kills a baby. There is a strong appeal to the reader's humanitarian instincts; Sleepy stands for all children. The plot is shaped up in an atmosphere of hallucination that makes the improbable quite probable. The reader easily accepts the truth that lies back of the hallucinations.

As in all short-stories, the opposing forces in the dramatic struggle are conspicuously arrayed against each other: Varka on the one hand and her employers and the baby on the other. The author introduces hallucinations early in the story, for the events take place in two worlds, the actual world of the shoemaker and the world of Varka's childhood, created by her tortured imagination. The reader does not

confuse the two worlds; the author makes the "misty visions" of Varka's "half-slumbering brain" plausible by the sensory details of the opening paragraphs. The death of the baby would have been an instance of crude horror if the author had not emphasized the fact that Varka was in the grip of hallucination. The persistent refrain of Varka's lullaby creates the effect of unity. Burns' phrase, "man's inhumanity to man," expresses the theme of the story.*

SLEEPY

by Anton Chekhov

Night. Varka, the little nurse, a girl of thirteen, is rocking the cradle in which the baby is lying, and humming, hardly audibly:

The tone is quiet, altogether lovely: singing a baby to sleep.

"Hush-a-bye, my baby wee,
While I sing a song for thee."

A little green lamp is burning before the ikon; there is a string stretched from one end of the room to the other, on which baby-clothes and a pair of big black trousers are hanging. There is a big patch of green on the ceiling from the ikon lamp, and the baby-clothes and the trousers throw long shadows on the stove, on the cradle, and on Varka. . . . When the lamp begins to flicker, the green patch and the shadows come to life, and are set in motion, as though by the wind. It is stuffy. There is a smell of cabbage soup, and of the inside of a boot-shop.

But an abrupt change occurs: green lamp flickers; shadows of big black trousers are in motion on the ceiling; the air is stuffy.

The baby is crying. For a long while he has been hoarse and exhausted with crying; but he still goes on screaming, and there is no knowing when he will stop. And Varka is sleepy. Her eyes are glued together, her head droops, her neck aches. She cannot move her eyelids or her lips, and she feels as though her

The baby cries, screams. Varka is so sleepy that she cannot move.

* From *The Cook's Wedding and Other Stories*, by Anton Chekhov. By permission of The Macmillan Company, New York.

face is dried and wooden, as though her head has become as small as the head of a pin.

"Hush-a-bye, my baby wee," she hums, "while I cook the groats for thee. . . ."

But she hums.

A cricket is churring in the stove. Through the door in the next room the master and the apprentice Afanasy are snoring. . . . The cradle creaks plaintively, Varka murmurs—and it all blends into that soothing music of the night to which it is so sweet to listen, when one is lying in bed. Now that music is merely irritating and oppressive, because it goads her to sleep, and she must not sleep; if Varka—God forbid!—should fall asleep, her master and mistress would beat her.

Varka must not sleep. God forbid!

The lamp flickers. The patch of green and the shadows are set in motion, forcing themselves on Varka's fixed, half-open eyes, and in her half-slumbering brain are fashioned into misty visions. She sees dark clouds chasing one another over the sky, and screaming like the baby. But then the wind blows, the clouds are gone, and Varka sees a broad highroad covered with liquid mud; along the highroad stretch files of wagons, while people with wallets on their backs are trudging along and shadows flit backwards and forwards; on both sides she can see forests through the cold harsh mist. All at once the people with their wallets and their shadows fall on the ground in the liquid mud.

Varka has visions, blending past tragic experiences of her childhood and the boot-shop surroundings.

"What is that for?" Varka asks. "To sleep, to sleep!" they answer her. And they fall sound asleep, and sleep sweetly, while crows and magpies sit on the telegraph wires, scream like the baby, and try to wake them.

Confused vision is the result.

"Hush-a-bye, my baby wee, and I will sing a song to thee," murmurs Varka, and now she sees herself in a dark stuffy hut.

Her dead father, Yefim Stepanov, is tossing from side to side on the floor. She does not see him, but she hears him moaning and rolling on the floor from pain. "His guts have burst," as he says; the pain is so violent that he cannot utter a single word, and can only draw in his breath and clack his teeth like the rattling of a drum:

Further vision of the death of her father becomes vivid.

"Boo—boo—boo—boo. . . ."

Her mother, Pelageya, has run to the master's house to say that Yefim is dying. She has been gone a long time, and ought to be back. Varka lies awake on the stove, and hears her father's "boo—boo—boo." And then she hears someone has driven up to the hut. It is a young doctor from the town, who has been sent from the big house where he is staying on a visit. The doctor comes into the hut; he cannot be seen in the darkness, but he can be heard coughing and rattling the door.

The confusion of the death scene of her father is clear in Varka's mind; the hut is dark, evidence of abject poverty.

"Light a candle," he says.

"Boo—boo—boo," answers Yefim.

Pelageya rushes to the stove and begins looking for the broken pot with the matches. A minute passes in silence. The doctor, feeling in his pocket, lights a match.

"In a minute, sir, in a minute," says Pelageya. She rushes out of the hut, and soon afterwards comes back with a bit of candle.

The mother gets a bit of candle.

Yefim's cheeks are rosy and his eyes are shining, and there is a peculiar keenness in his glance, as though he were seeing right through the hut and the doctor.

"Come, what is it? What are you thinking about?" says the doctor, bending down to him. "Aha! have you had this long?"

"What? Dying, your honour, my hour has come. . . . I am not to stay among the living. . . ."

The father knows that his hour has come, but he does not forget to say, "your honour."

"Don't talk nonsense! We will cure you!"

"That's as you please, your honour, we humbly thank you, only we understand. . . . Since death has come, there it is."

The doctor spends a quarter of an hour over Yefim, then he gets up and says:

"I can do nothing. You must go into the hospital, there they will operate on you. Go at once. . . . You must go! It's rather late, they will all be asleep in the hospital, but that doesn't matter, I will give you a note. Do you hear?"

The doctor is businesslike in giving orders.

"Kind sir, but what can he go in?" says Pelageya. "We have no horse."

"Never mind. I'll ask your master, he'll let you have a horse."

The doctor goes away, the candle goes out, and again there is the sound of "boo—boo—boo." Half an hour later someone drives up to the hut. A cart has been sent to take Yefim to the hospital. He gets ready and goes. . . .

But now it is a clear bright morning. Pelageya is not at home; she has gone to the hospital to find what is being done to Yefim. Somewhere there is a baby crying, and Varka hears someone singing with her own voice:

Varka waits at home for news of her father. The present crowds in on the past; she hears herself singing—evidence of her detachment and of her two existences.

"Hush-a-bye, my baby wee, I will sing a song to thee."

Pelageya comes back; she crosses herself and whispers:

"They put him to rights in the night, but towards morning he gave up his soul to God. . . . The Kingdom of Heaven be his and peace everlasting. . . . They say he was taken too late. . . . He ought to have gone sooner. . . ."

She hears of her father's death

Varka goes out into the road and cries there, but all at once someone hits her on the back of her head so hard that her forehead knocks against a birch tree. She raises her eyes, and sees facing her, her master, the shoemaker.

and cries on the road, thinks that she has fallen against a tree only to find that it is her master, the shoemaker, who has slapped her.

"What are you about, you scabby slut?" he

says. "The child is crying, and you are asleep!"

He gives her a sharp slap behind the ear, and she shakes her head, rocks the cradle, and murmurs her song. The green patch and the shadows from the trousers and the baby-clothes move up and down, nod to her, and soon take possession of her brain again. Again she sees the highroad covered with liquid mud. The people with wallets on their backs and the shadows have lain down and are fast asleep. Looking at them, Varka has a passionate longing for sleep; she would lie down with enjoyment, but her mother Pelageya is walking beside her, hurrying her on. They are hastening together to the town to find situations.

Now, the longing for sleep is greater than ever; the vision of the past and the present are merged; the hallucination is complete.

"Give alms, for Christ's sake!" her mother begs of the people they meet. "Show us the Divine Mercy, kind-hearted gentlefolk!"

Her sense of reality is lost completely.

"Give the baby here!" a familiar voice answers.

"Give the baby here!" the same voice repeats, this time harshly and angrily. "Are you asleep, you wretched girl?"

But again the harsh voice recalls Varka to reality.

Varka jumps up, and looking round grasps what is the matter: there is no highroad, no Pelageya, no people meeting them, there is only her mistress, who has come to feed the baby, and is standing in the middle of the room. While the stout, broad-shouldered woman nurses the child and soothes it, Varka stands looking at her and waiting till she has done. And outside the windows the air is already turning blue, the shadows and the green patch on the ceiling are visibly growing pale, it will soon be morning.

Day is breaking.

"Take him," says her mistress, buttoning up her chemise over her bosom; "he is crying. He must be bewitched."

Varka takes the baby, puts him in the cradle, and begins rocking it again. The green patch and the shadows gradually disappear, and now

there is nothing to force itself on her eyes and cloud her brain. But she is as sleepy as before, fearfully sleepy! Varka lays her head on the edge of the cradle, and rocks her whole body to overcome her sleepiness, but yet her eyes are glued together, and her head is heavy.

Varka goes to sleep, but again is recalled to the shop, and is glad of an excuse to move.

"Varka, heat the stove!" she hears the master's voice through the door.

So it is time to get up and set to work. Varka leaves the cradle, and runs to the shed for firewood. She is glad. When one moves and runs about, one is not so sleepy as when one is sitting down. She brings the wood, heats the stove, and feels that her wooden face is getting supple again, and that her thoughts are growing clearer.

It is daybreak; she has had no sleep.

"Varka, set the samovar!" shouts her mistress.

Varka splits a piece of wood, but has scarcely time to light the splinters and put them in the samovar, when she hears a fresh order:

"Varka, clean the master's goloshes!"

She sits down on the floor, cleans the goloshes, and thinks how nice it would be to put her head into a big deep golosh, and have a little nap in it. . . . And all at once the golosh grows, swells, fills up the whole room. Varka drops the brush, but at once shakes her head, opens her eyes wide, and tries to look at things so that they may not grow big and move before her eyes.

She thinks that her master's golosh is as big as the room.

"Varka, wash the steps outside; I am ashamed for the customers to see them!"

Varka washes the steps, sweeps and dusts the rooms, then heats another stove and runs to the shop. There is a great deal of work: she hasn't one minute free.

She has not one free moment.

But nothing is so hard as standing in the same place at the kitchen table peeling potatoes. Her head droops over the table, the

potatoes dance before her eyes, the knife tumbles out of her hand while her fat, angry mistress is moving about near her with her sleeves tucked up, talking so loud that it makes a ringing in Varka's ears. It is agonizing, too, to wait at dinner, to wash, to sew, there are minutes when she longs to flop on the floor regardless of everything, and to sleep.

The day passes. Seeing the windows getting dark, Varka presses her temples that feel as though they were made of wood, and smiles, though she does not know why. The dusk of evening caresses her eyes that will hardly keep open, and promises her sound sleep soon. In the evening visitors come.

The day passes.

Evening comes.

Visitors come.

"Varka, set the samovar!" shouts her mistress.

The samovar is a little one, and before the visitors have drunk all the tea they want, she has to heat it five times. After tea Varka stands for a whole hour on the same spot, looking at the visitors, and waiting for orders.

More work; more orders.

"Varka, run and buy three bottles of beer!"

She starts off, and tries to run as quickly as she can, to drive away sleep.

"Varka, fetch some vodka! Varka, where's the corkscrew? Varka, clean a herring!"

But now, at last, the visitors have gone; the lights are put out, the master and mistress go to bed.

"Varka, rock the baby!" she hears the last order.

The cricket churrs in the stove; the green patch on the ceiling and the shadows from the trousers and the baby-clothes force themselves on Varka's half-opened eyes again, wink at her and cloud her mind.

The scene of last night is repeated; the cricket churrs; trousers and baby-clothes make shadows.

"Hush-a-bye, my baby wee," she murmurs, "and I will sing a song to thee."

Varka sings;

And the baby screams, and is worn out with

the baby screams;

screaming. Again Varka sees the muddy highroad, the people with wallets, her mother Pelageya, her father Yefim. She understands everything, she recognizes everyone, but through her half-sleep she cannot understand the force which binds her, hand and foot, weighs upon her, and prevents her from living. She looks round, searches for that force that she may escape from it, but she cannot find it. At last, tired to death, she does her very utmost, strains her eyes, looks up at the flickering green patch, and listening to the screaming, finds the foe who will not let her live.

the visions of her childhood appear.

Tired to death, Varka thinks that the baby is her foe because it will not let her sleep.

That foe is the baby.

She laughs. It seems strange to her that she has failed to grasp such a simple thing before. The green patch, the shadows, and the cricket seem to laugh and wonder too.

The hallucination takes possession of Varka. She gets up from her stool, and with a broad smile on her face and wide, unblinking eyes, she walks up and down the room. She feels pleased and tickled at the thought that she will be rid directly of the baby that binds her hand and foot. . . . Kill the baby and then sleep, sleep, sleep. . . .

Laughing and winking and shaking her fingers at the green patch, Varka steals up to the cradle and bends over the baby. When she has strangled him, she quickly lies down on the floor, laughs with delight that she can sleep, and in a minute is sleeping as sound as the dead.

Varka laughs at the green shadows, strangles the baby, lies down on the floor laughing, to sleep—to sleep as sound as the dead.

"A Horseman in the Sky" by Ambrose Bierce illustrates all the principles of good short-story telling and therefore insures adequate response from the reader. The conflict entails anguish with father and son arrayed against each other. With a background of the War

between the States, on the one side is the father, a Virginian, thoroughly entrenched in traditions and convictions from which he cannot escape; on the other side, is the son, a Virginian, too, heir to mores that seem inescapable, but apparently the bonds have been loosened. Not only is there a conflict between father and son, but there is a conflict between the affection of Carter Druse for his father and his loyalty to a principle that makes a Virginia soldier fight on the side of the North.

The reader will note the grimly ironical conclusion. The final action comes full circle to meet the initial action, when the father said: "Whatever may occur, do what you conceive to be your duty." The father pronounced his own death sentence.

The reader will find the same characteristics of the short-story noted in the story by Sinclair Lewis and will use the familiar reading technique applicable to the short-story.

A HORSEMAN IN THE SKY

by Ambrose Bierce

One sunny afternoon in the autumn of the year 1861, a soldier lay in a clump of laurel by the side of a road in western Virginia. He lay at full length upon his stomach, his feet resting upon the toes, his head upon the left forearm. His extended right hand loosely grasped his rifle. But for the somewhat methodical disposition of his limbs and a slight rhythmic movement of the cartridge box at the back of his belt he might have been thought to be dead. He was asleep at his post of duty. But if detected he would be dead shortly afterward, death being the just and legal penalty of his crime.

The clump of laurel in which the criminal lay was in the angle of a road which, after ascending southward a steep declivity to that point, turned sharply to the west running along the summit for perhaps one hundred yards. There it turned southward again and went zigzagging downward through the forest. At the salient of that second angle was a large flat rock, jutting out northward, overlooking the deep valley from which the road ascended. The rock capped a high cliff; a stone dropped from its outer edge would have fallen sheer downward one thousand feet to the tops of the pines. The angle where the soldier lay was on another

spur of the same cliff. Had he been awake he would have commanded a view, not only of the short arm of the road and the jutting rock, but of the entire profile of the cliff below it. It might well have made him giddy to look. The country was wooded everywhere except at the bottom of the valley to the northward, where there was a small natural meadow, through which flowed a stream scarcely visible from the valley's rim. This open ground looked hardly larger than an ordinary dooryard, but was really several acres in extent. Its green was more vivid than that of the enclosing forest. Away beyond it rose a line of giant cliffs similar to those upon which we are supposed to stand in our survey of the savage scene, and through which the road had somehow made its climb to the summit. The configuration of the valley, indeed, was such that from this point of observation it seemed entirely shut in, anyone could but have wondered how the road which found a way out of it had found a way into it, and whence came and whither went the waters of the stream that parted the meadow more than a thousand feet below.

No country is so wild and difficult but men will make it a theater of war; concealed in the forest at the bottom of that military rattrap, in which half a hundred men in possession of the exits might have starved an army to submission, lay five regiments of Federal infantry. They had marched all the previous day and night and were resting. At nightfall they would take to the road again, climb to the place where their unfaithful sentinel now slept, and descending the other slope of the ridge fall upon a camp of the enemy at about midnight. Their hope was to surprise it, for the road led to the rear of it. In case of failure, their position would be perilous in the extreme, and fail they surely would, should accident or vigilance apprise the enemy of the movement.

II

The sleeping sentinel in the clump of laurel was a young Virginian named Carter Druse. He was the son of wealthy parents, an only child, and had known such ease and cultivation and high living as wealth and taste were able to command in the mountain country of western Virginia. His home was but a few miles from where he now lay. One morning he had risen from the breakfast table and said, quietly but gravely: "Father, a

Union regiment has arrived at Grafton. I am going to join it."

The father lifted his leonine head, looked at the son a moment in silence, and replied: "Well, go, sir, and whatever may occur do what you conceive to be your duty. Virginia, to which you are a traitor, must get on without you. Should we both live to the end of the war, we will speak further of the matter. Your mother, as the physician has informed you, is in a most critical condition; at the best she cannot be with us longer than a few weeks, but that time is precious. It would be better not to disturb her."

So Carter Druse, bowing reverently to his father, who returned the salute with a stately courtesy that masked a breaking heart, left the home of his childhood to go soldiering. By conscience and courage, by deeds of devotion and daring, he soon commended himself to his fellows and his officers; and it was to these qualities and to some knowledge of the country that he owed his selection for his present perilous duty at the extreme outpost. Nevertheless, fatigue had been stronger than resolution and he had fallen asleep. What good or bad angel came in a dream to rouse him from his state of crime, who shall say? Without a movement, without a sound, in the profound silence and the languor of the late afternoon, some invisible messenger of fate touched with unsealing finger the eyes of his consciousness—whispered into the ear of his spirit the mysterious awakening word which no human lips ever have spoken, no human memory ever has recalled. He quietly raised his forehead from his arm and looked between the masking stems of the laurels, instinctively closing his right hand about the stock of his rifle.

His first feeling was a keen artistic delight. On a colossal pedestal, the cliff—motionless at the extreme edge of the capping rock and sharply outlined against the sky—was an equestrian statue of impressive dignity. The figure of the man sat the figure of the horse, straight and soldierly, but with the repose of a Grecian god carved in the marble which limits the suggestion of activity. The gray costume harmonized with its aerial background; the metal of accoutrement and caparison was softened and subdued by the shadow; the animal's skin had no points of high light. A carbine strikingly foreshortened lay across the pommel of the saddle, kept in place by the right hand grasping it at the "grip"; the left hand, holding the bridle rein, was invisible. In silhouette agains the sky the profile of the horse was

cut with the sharpness of a cameo; it looked across the heights of air to the confronting cliffs beyond. The face of the rider, turned slightly away, showed only an outline of temple and beard; he was looking downward to the bottom of the valley. Magnified by its lift against the sky and by the soldier's testifying sense of the formidableness of a near enemy, the group appeared of heroic, almost colossal, size.

For an instant Druse had a strange, half-defined feeling that he had slept to the end of the war and was looking upon a noble work of art reared upon that eminence to commemorate the deeds of an heroic past of which he had been an inglorious part. The feeling was dispelled by a slight movement of the group: the horse, without moving its feet, had drawn its body slightly backward from the verge; the man remained immobile as before. Broad awake and keenly alive to the significance of the situation, Druse now brought the butt of his rifle against his cheek by cautiously pushing the barrel forward through the bushes, cocked the piece, and glancing through the sights covered a vital spot of the horseman's breast. A touch upon the trigger and all would have been well with Carter Druse. At that instant the horseman turned his head and looked in the direction of his concealed foeman—seemed to look into his very face, into his eyes, into his brave, compassionate heart.

Is it then so terrible to kill an enemy in war—an enemy who has surprised a secret vital to the safety of one's self and comrades—an enemy more formidable for his knowledge than all his army for its numbers? Carter Druse grew pale; he shook in every limb, turned faint, and saw the statuesque group before him as black figures, rising, falling, moving unsteadily in arcs of circles in a fiery sky. His hand fell away from his weapon, his head slowly dropped until his face rested on the leaves in which he lay. This courageous gentleman and hardy soldier was near swooning from intensity of emotion.

It was not for long; in another moment his face was raised from earth, his hands resumed their places on the rifle, his forefinger sought the trigger; mind, heart, and eyes were clear, conscience and reason sound. He could not hope to capture that enemy; to alarm him would but send him dashing to his camp with his fatal news. The duty of the soldier was plain: the man

must be shot dead from ambush—without warning, without a moment's spiritual preparation, with never so much as an unspoken prayer, he must be sent to his account. But no—there is a hope; he may have discovered nothing—perhaps he is but admiring the landscape. If permitted, he may turn and ride carelessly away in the direction whence he came. Surely it will be possible to judge at the instant of his withdrawing whether he knows. It may well be that his fixity of attention—Druse turned his head and looked through the deeps of air downward, as from the surface to the bottom of a translucent sea. He saw creeping across the green meadow a sinuous line of figures of men and horses—some foolish commander was permitting the soldiers of his escort to water their beasts in the open, in plain view from a dozen summits!

Druse withdrew his eyes from the valley and fixed them again upon the group of man and horse in the sky, and again it was through the sights of his rifle. But this time his aim was at the horse. In his memory, as if they were a divine mandate, rang the words of his father at their parting: "Whatever may occur, do what you conceive to be your duty." He was calm now. His teeth were firmly but not rigidly closed; his nerves were as tranquil as a sleeping babe's—not a tremor affected any muscle of his body; his breathing, until suspended in the act of taking aim, was regular and slow. Duty had conquered; the spirit had said to the body: "Peace, be still." He fired.

III

An officer of the Federal force, who in a spirit of adventure or in quest of knowledge had left the hidden bivouac in the valley, and with aimless feet had made his way to the lower edge of a small open space near the foot of the cliff, was considering what he had to gain by pushing his exploration further. At a distance of a quarter-mile before him, but apparently at a stone's throw, rose from its fringe of pines the gigantic face of rock, towering to so great a height above him that it made him giddy to look up to where its edge cut a sharp, rugged line against the sky. It presented a clean, vertical profile against a background of blue sky to a point half the way down, and of distant hills, hardly less blue, thence to the tops of the trees at its base. Lifting his

eyes to the dizzy altitude of its summit the officer saw an astonishing sight—a man on horseback riding down into the valley through the air!

Straight upright sat the rider, in military fashion, with a firm seat in the saddle, a strong clutch upon the rein to hold his charger from too impetuous a plunge. From his bare head his long hair streamed upward, waving like a plume. His hands were concealed in the cloud of the horse's lifted mane. The animal's body was as level as if every hoof stroke encountered the resistant earth. Its motions were those of a wild gallop, but even as the officer looked they ceased, with all the legs thrown sharply forward as in the act of alighting from a leap. But this was a flight!

Filled with amazement and terror by this apparition of a horseman in the sky—half believing himself the chosen scribe of some new Apocalypse, the officer was overcome by the intensity of his emotions; his legs failed him and he fell. Almost at the same instant he heard a crashing sound in the trees—a sound that died without an echo—and all was still.

The officer rose to his feet, trembling. The familiar sensation of an abraded shin recalled his dazed faculties. Pulling himself together he ran rapidly obliquely away from the cliff to a point distant from its foot; thereabout he expected to find his man; and thereabout he naturally failed. In the fleeting instant of his vision his imagination had been so wrought upon by the apparent grace and ease and intention of the marvelous performance that it did not occur to him that the line of march of aerial cavalry is directly downward, and that he could find the objects of his search at the very foot of the cliff. A half-hour later he returned to camp.

This officer was a wise man; he knew better than to tell an incredible truth. He said nothing of what he had seen. But when the commander asked him if in his scout he had learned anything of advantage to the expedition he answered:

"Yes, sir; there is no road leading down into this valley from the southward."

The commander, knowing better, smiled.

IV

After firing his shot, Private Carter Druse reloaded his rifle and resumed his watch. Ten minutes had hardly passed when a

Federal sergeant crept cautiously to him on hands and knees. Druse neither turned his head nor looked at him, but lay without motion or sign of recognition.

"Did you fire?" the sergeant whispered.

"Yes."

"At what?"

"A horse. It was standing on yonder rock—pretty far out. You see it is no longer there. It went over the cliff."

The man's face was white, but he showed no other sign of emotion. Having answered, he turned away his eyes and said no more. The sergeant did not understand.

"See here, Druse," he said, after a moment's silence, "it's no use making a mystery. I order you to report. Was there anybody on the horse?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"My father."

The sergeant rose to his feet and walked away. "Good God!" he said.

It would be possible to condense the story of what actually occurred in "To Build a Fire"* into a short paragraph, but a narrative paragraph would account for only the external happenings. The significant element in the story is what occurred within the man, the transformation of the spirit of the man "who was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances." The story is long; it moves slowly; the tone is quiet and reflective; it runs the gamut of feeling from the cheerful, buoyant self-confidence at the beginning when the man sets out on his journey to the end when he contemplates death from freezing as a comforting anaesthetic—"to sleep off to death. Freezing is not so bad—worse ways to die." With complete detachment, he contemplates with interest coming with "the boys" next day to find himself. "He did not belong with himself any more."

The conflict in the story is obvious; it is nature, relentless, objective, inexorable, beautiful, immaculate, arrayed against man with his

* "To Build a Fire" from *Lost Face* by Jack London. Published by The Macmillan Company, New York. Reprinted by permission of Mrs. Charmian London.

puny strength and his pitiful boasting. As the story progresses, the strength of the man crumbles steadily, but the elements of nature are unchanging—as they were in the beginning, so will they always be. The struggle of man with nature is a losing struggle, with Moby Dick always defeating Ahab.

Another characteristic that strikes the perceptive reader is the man's slowness in interpreting what seems so apparent. At times he lacks the instinctive intelligence of the dog. In fact, the dog assumes the proportions of a character in the story. In the end, it is the dog that recognizes death and accepts it, trotting up the trail in the direction of the camp he knew; the story-teller strikes the C-major of every day life, to use Robert Browning's phrase; the end meets the beginning.

The sensitive reader will be struck by the prophetic phrases and hints that foreshadow the end: "intangible pace"; "subtle gloom"; "he was without imagination"; "temperature did not matter"; "the dog's tail drooping discouragement"; "the man was not much given to thinking", and so the writer proceeds recording the inevitable in any conflict of man with relentless nature.

The author calls his two characters "the man," "the dog," not giving them names of their own, and thus achieving a note of universality. In effect the author says that in all situations of which this is an instance, imperturbable nature is scarcely aware of man and his efforts to pit his strength against the universe.

The reader is responsive to the rhythm of the selection. The pattern of accented and unaccented syllables, the light and dark vowels, succeeding in rhythmic formation gives evidence of the fact that prose and poetry are more closely related than is usually recognized. Note the following lines:

Day had broken, cold and gray,
Exceedingly cold and gray.

* * *

It grew like an avalanche
And it descended without warning
Upon the man and the fire
And the fire was blotted out.

TO BUILD A FIRE
by Jack London

Day had broken cold and gray, exceedingly cold and gray, when the man turned aside from the main Yukon trail and climbed the high earth-bank, where a dim and little-traveled trail led eastward through the fat spruce timberland. It was a steep bank, and he paused for breath at the top, excusing the act to himself by looking at his watch. It was nine o'clock. There was no sun nor hint of sun, though there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day, and yet there seemed an intangible pall over the face of things, a subtle gloom that made the day dark, and that was due to the absence of sun. This fact did not worry the man. He was used to the lack of sun. It had been days since he had seen the sun, and he knew that a few more days must pass before that cheerful orb, due south, would just peep above the sky-line and dip immediately from view.

The man flung a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. It was all pure white, rolling in gentle undulations where the ice-jams of the freeze-up had formed. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark hair-line that curved and twisted from around the spruce-covered island to the south, and that curved and twisted away into the north, where it disappeared behind another spruce-covered island. This dark hair-line was the trail—the main trail—that led south five hundred miles to the Chilcoot Pass, Dyea, and salt water; and that led north seventy miles to Dawson, and still on to the north a thousand miles to Nulato, and finally to St. Michael on Bering Sea, a thousand miles and half a thousand more.

But all this—the mysterious, far-reaching hair-line trail, the absence of sun from the sky, the tremendous cold, and the strangeness and weirdness of it all—made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a newcomer in the land, a *chechaquo*, and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty-

odd degrees of frost. Such fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man's frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold; and from there on it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bite of frost that hurt and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, earflaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.

As he turned to go on, he spat speculatively. There was a sharp, explosive crackle that startled him. He spat again. And again, in the air, before it could fall to the snow, the spittle crackled. He knew that at fifty below spittle crackled on the snow, but this spittle had crackled in the air. Undoubtedly it was colder than fifty below—how much colder he did not know. But the temperature did not matter. He was bound for the old claim on the left fork of Henderson Creek where the boys were already. They had come over across the divide from the Indian Creek country, while he had come the roundabout way to take a look at the possibilities of getting out logs in the spring from the islands in the Yukon. He would be in to camp by six o'clock; a bit after dark, it was true, but the boys would be there, a fire would be going, and a hot supper would be ready. As for lunch, he pressed his hand against the protruding bundle under his jacket. It was also under his shirt, wrapped up in a handkerchief and lying against the naked skin. It was the only way to keep the biscuits from freezing. He smiled agreeably to himself as he thought of those biscuits, each cut open and sopped in bacon grease, and each enclosing a generous slice of fried bacon.

He plunged in among the big spruce trees. The trail was faint. A foot of snow had fallen since the last sled had passed over, and he was glad he was without a sled, traveling light. In fact, he carried nothing but the lunch wrapped in the handkerchief. He was surprised, however, at the cold. It certainly was cold, he concluded, as he rubbed his numb nose and cheek-bones with his mittened hand. He was a warm-whiskered man, but the hair on

his face did not protect the high cheek-bones and the eager nose that thrust itself aggressively into the frosty air.

At the man's heels trotted a dog, a big native husky, the proper wolf-dog, gray-coated and without any visible or temperamental difference from its brother, the wild wolf. The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for traveling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment. In reality, it was not merely colder than fifty below zero; it was colder than sixty below, than seventy below. It was seventy-five below zero. Since the freezing-point is thirty-two above zero, it meant that one hundred and seven degrees of frost obtained. The dog did not know anything about thermometers. Possibly in its brain there was no sharp consciousness of a condition of very cold such as was in the man's brain. But the brute had its instinct. It experienced a vague but menacing apprehension that subdued it and made it slink along at the man's heels, and that made it question eagerly every unwonted movement of the man as if expecting him to go into camp or to seek shelter somewhere and build a fire. The dog had learned fire, and it wanted fire, or else to burrow under the snow and cuddle its warmth away from the air.

The frozen moisture of its breathing had settled on its fur in a fine powder of frost, and especially were its jowls, muzzle, and eyelashes whitened by its crystaled breath. The man's red beard and mustache were likewise frosted, but more solidly, the deposit taking the form of ice and increasing with every warm, moist breath he exhaled. Also, the man was chewing tobacco, and the muzzle of ice held his lips so rigidly that he was unable to clear his chin when he expelled the juice. The result was that a crystal beard of the color and solidity of amber was increasing its length on his chin. If he fell down it would shatter itself, like glass, into brittle fragments. But he did not mind the appendage. It was the penalty all tobacco-chewers paid in that country, and he had been out before in two cold snaps. They had not been so cold as this, he knew, but by the spirit thermometer at Sixty Mile he knew they had been registered at fifty below and at fifty-five.

He held on through the level stretch of woods for several miles, crossed a wide flat of dark tussocks, and dropped down a bank to the frozen bed of a small stream. This was Henderson

Creek, and he knew he was ten miles from the forks. He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He was making four miles an hour, and he calculated that he would arrive at the forks at half-past twelve. He decided to celebrate that event by eating his lunch there.

The dog dropped in again at his heels, with a tail drooping discouragement, as the man swung along the creek-bed. The furrow of the old sled-trail was plainly visible, but a dozen inches of snow covered the marks of the last runners. In a month no man had come up or down that silent creek. The man held steadily on. He was not much given to thinking, and just then particularly he had nothing to think about save that he would eat lunch at the forks and that at six o'clock he would be in camp with the boys. There was nobody to talk to; and, had there been, speech would have been impossible because of the ice-muzzle on his mouth. So he continued monotonously to chew tobacco and to increase the length of his amber beard.

Once in a while the thought reiterated itself that it was very cold and that he had never experienced such cold. As he walked along he rubbed his cheek-bones and nose with the back of his mittened hand. He did this automatically, now and again changing hands. But rub as he would, the instant he stopped his cheek-bones went numb, and the following instant the end of his nose went numb. He was sure to frost his cheeks; he knew that, and experienced a pang of regret that he had not devised a nose-strap of the sort Bud wore in cold snaps. Such a strap passed across the cheeks, as well, and saved them. But it didn't matter much, after all. What were frosted cheeks? A bit painful, that was all; they were never serious.

Empty as the man's mind was of thoughts, he was keenly observant, and he noticed the changes in the creek, and curves and bends and timber-jams, and always he sharply noted where he placed his feet. Once, coming around a bend, he shied abruptly like a startled horse, curved away from the place where he had been walking, and retreated several paces back along the trail. The creek he knew was frozen clear to the bottom—no creek could contain water in that arctic winter—but he knew also that there were springs that bubbled out from the hillsides and ran along under the snow and on top of the ice of the creek. He knew that the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he

knew likewise their danger. They were traps. They hid pools of water under the snow that might be three inches deep, or three feet. Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow. Sometimes there were alternate layers of water and ice-skin, so that when one broke through he kept on breaking through for awhile, sometimes wetting himself almost to the waist.

That was why he had shied in such panic. He had felt the give under his feet and heard the crackle of a snow-hidden ice-skin. And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger. At the very least it meant delay, for he would be forced to stop and build a fire, and under its protection to bare his feet while he dried his socks and moccasins. He stood and studied the creek-bed and its banks, and decided that the flow of water came from the right. He reflected a while, rubbing his nose and cheeks, then skirted to the left, stepping gingerly and testing the footing for each step. Once clear of the danger, he took a fresh chew of tobacco and swung along at his four-mile gait.

In the course of the next two hours he came upon several similar traps. Usually the snow above the hidden pools had a sunken, candid appearance that advertised the danger. Once again, however, he had a close call; and once, suspecting the danger, he compelled the dog to go on in front. The dog did not want to go. It hung back until the man shoved it forward, and then it went quickly across the white, unbroken surface. Suddenly it broke through, floundered to one side, and got away to firmer footing. It had wet its forefeet and legs, and almost immediately the water that clung to it turned to ice. It made quick efforts to lick the ice off its legs, then dropped down in the snow and began to bite out the ice that had formed between the toes. This was a matter of instinct. To permit the ice to remain would mean sore feet. It did not know this. It merely obeyed the mysterious prompting that arose from the deep crypts of its being. But the man knew, having achieved a judgment on the subject, and he removed the mitten from his right hand and helped tear out the ice-particles. He did not expose his fingers more than a minute, and was astonished at the swift numbness that smote them. It certainly was cold. He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest.

At twelve o'clock the day was at its brightest. Yet the sun was

too far south on its winter journey to clear the horizon. The bulge of the earth intervened between it and Henderson Creek, where the man walked under a clear sky at noon and cast no shadow. At half-past twelve, to the minute, he arrived at the forks of the creek. He was pleased at the speed he had made. If he kept it up, he would certainly be with the boys by six. He unbuttoned his jacket and shirt and drew forth his lunch. The action consumed no more than a quarter of a minute, yet in that brief moment the numbness laid hold of the exposed fingers. He did not put the mitten on, but, instead, struck the fingers a dozen sharp smashes against his leg. Then he sat down on a snow-covered log to eat. The sting that followed upon the striking of his fingers against his leg ceased so quickly that he was startled. He had had no chance to take a bite of biscuit. He struck the fingers repeatedly and returned them to the mitten, baring the other hand for the purpose of eating. He tried to take a mouthful, but the ice-muzzle prevented. He had forgotten to build a fire and thaw out. He chuckled at his foolishness, and as he chuckled he noted the numbness creeping into the exposed fingers. Also, he noted that the stinging which had first come to his toes when he sat down was already passing away. He wondered whether his toes were warm or numb. He moved them inside the moccasins and decided that they were numb.

He pulled the mitten on hurriedly and stood up. He was a bit frightened. He stamped up and down until the stinging returned into the feet. It certainly was cold, was his thought. That man from Sulphur Creek had spoken the truth when telling how cold it sometimes got in the country. And he had laughed at him at the time! That showed one must not be too sure of things. There was no mistake about it, it *was* cold. He strode up and down, stamping his feet and threshing his arms, until reassured by the returning warmth. Then he got out matches and proceeded to make a fire. From the undergrowth, where high water of the previous spring had lodged a supply of seasoned twigs, he got his fire-wood. Working carefully from a small beginning, he soon had a roaring fire, over which he thawed the ice from his face and in the protection of which he ate his biscuits. For the moment the cold of space was outwitted. The dog took satisfaction in the fire, stretching out close enough for warmth and far enough away to escape being singed.

When the man had finished, he filled his pipe and took his comfortable time over a smoke. Then he pulled on his mittens, settled the earflaps of his cap firmly about his ears, and took the creek trail up the left fork. The dog was disappointed and yearned back toward the fire. This man did not know cold. Possibly all the generations of his ancestry had been ignorant of cold, of real cold, of cold one hundred and seven degrees below freezing-point. But the dog knew; all its ancestry knew, and it had inherited the knowledge. And it knew that it was not good to walk abroad in such fearful cold. It was the time to lie snug in a hole in the snow and wait for a curtain of cloud to be drawn across the face of outer space when this cold came. On the other hand, there was no keen intimacy between the dog and the man. The one was the toil-slave of the other, and the only caresses it had ever received were the caresses of the whip-lash and of harsh and menacing throat-sounds that threatened the whip-lash. So the dog made no effort to communicate its apprehension to the man. It was not concerned in the welfare of the man; it was for its own sake that it yearned back toward the fire. But the man whistled, and spoke to it with the sound of whip-lashes, and the dog swung in at the man's heels and followed after.

The man took a chew of tobacco and proceeded to start a new amber beard. Also, his moist breath quickly powdered with white his mustache, eyebrows, and lashes. There did not seem to be so many springs on the left fork of the Henderson, and for half an hour the man saw no signs of any. And then it happened. At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through. It was not deep. He wet himself half way to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust.

He was angry, and cursed his luck aloud. He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o'clock, and this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his foot-gear. This was imperative at that low temperature—he knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank, which he climbed. On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small spruce trees, was a high-water deposit of dry fire-wood—sticks and twigs, principally, but also larger portions of seasoned branches and fine, dry, last year's grasses. He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow. This served for a foundation and pre-

vented the young flame from drowning itself in the snow it otherwise would melt. The flame he got by touching a match to a small shred of birch-bark that he took from his pocket. This burned even more readily than paper. Placing it on the foundation, he fed the young flame with wisps of dry grass and with the tiniest dry twigs.

He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger. Gradually, as the flame grew stronger, he increased the size of the twigs with which he fed it. He squatted in the snow, pulling the twigs out from their entanglement in the brush and feeding directly to the flame. He knew there must be no failure. When it is seventy-five below zero, a man must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire—that is, if his feet are wet. If his feet are dry, and he fails, he can run along the trail for half a mile and restore his circulation. But the circulation of wet and freezing feet cannot be restored by running when it is seventy-five below. No matter how fast he runs, the wet feet will freeze the harder.

All this the man knew. The oldtimer on Sulphur Creek had told him about it the previous fall, and now he was appreciating the advice. Already all sensation had gone out of his feet. To build the fire he had been forced to remove his mittens, and the fingers had quickly gone numb. His pace of four miles an hour had kept his heart pumping blood to the surface of his body and to all the extremities. But the instant he stopped, the action of the pump eased down. The cold of space smote the unprotected tip of the planet, and he, being on that unprotected tip, received the full force of the blow. The blood of his body recoiled before it. The blood was alive, like the dog, and like the dog it wanted to hide away and cover itself up from the fearful cold. So long as he walked four miles an hour, he pumped that blood, willy-nilly, to the surface; but now it ebbed away and sank down into the recesses of his body. The extremities were the first to feel its absence. His wet feet froze the faster, and his exposed fingers numbed the faster, though they had not yet begun to freeze. Nose and cheeks were already freezing, while the skin of all his body chilled as it lost its blood.

But he was safe. Toes and nose and cheeks would be only touched by the frost, for the fire was beginning to burn with strength. He was feeding it with twigs the size of his finger. In another minute he would be able to feed it with branches the

size of his wrist, and then he could remove his wet foot-gear, and, while it dried, he could keep his naked feet warm by the fire, rubbing them at first, of course, with snow. The fire was a success. He was safe. He remembered the advice of the oldtimer on Sulphur Creek, and smiled. The oldtimer had been very serious in laying down the law that no man must travel alone in the Klondike after fifty below. Well, here he was; he had had the accident; he was alone; and he had saved himself. Those oldtimers were rather womanish, some of them, he thought. All a man had to do was to keep his head, and he was all right. Any man who was a man could travel alone. But it was surprising, the rapidity with which his cheeks and nose were freezing. And he had not thought his fingers could go lifeless in so short a time. Lifeless they were, for he could scarcely make them move together to grip a twig, and they seemed remote from his body and from him. When he touched a twig, he had to look and see whether or not he had hold of it. The wires were pretty well down between him and his finger-ends.

All of which counted for little. There was the fire, snapping and crackling and promising life with every dancing flame. He started to untie his moccasins. They were coated with ice; the thick German socks were like sheaths of iron halfway to the knees; and the moccasin strings were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted as by some conflagration. For a moment he tugged with his numb fingers, then, realizing the folly of trying to work with that lifeless flesh, he drew his sheath-knife.

But before he could cut the strings, it happened. It was his own fault or, rather, his mistake. He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree. He should have built it in the open. But it had been easier to pull the twigs from the brush and drop them directly on the fire. Now the tree under which he had done this carried a weight of snow on its boughs. No wind had blown for weeks, and each bough was fully freighted. Each time he had pulled a twig he had communicated a slight agitation to the tree—an imperceptible agitation, so far as he was concerned, but an agitation sufficient to bring about the disaster. High up in the tree one bough capsized its load of snow. This fell on the boughs beneath, capsizing them. This process continued, spreading out and involving the whole tree. It grew like an avalanche, and it descended without warning upon the man and the fire, and the

fire was blotted out! Where it had burned there was now spread a mantle of fresh and disordered snow.

The man was shocked. It was as though he had just heard his own sentence of death. For a moment he sat and stared at the spot where the fire had been. Then he grew very calm. Perhaps the oldtimer on Sulphur Creek was right. If he had only had a trail-mate he would have been in no danger now. The trail-mate could have built the fire. Well, it was up to him to build the fire over again, and this second time there must be no failure. Even if he succeeded, he would most likely lose some toes. His feet must be badly frozen by now, and there would be some time before the second fire was ready.

Such were his thoughts, but he did not sit and think them. He was busy all the time they were passing through his mind. He made a new foundation for a fire, this time in the open, where no treacherous tree could blot it out. Next, he gathered dry grasses and tiny twigs from the high-water flotsam. He could not bring his fingers together to pull them out, but he was able to gather them by the handful. In this way he got many rotten twigs and bits of green moss that were undesirable, but it was the best he could do. He worked methodically, even collecting an armful of the larger branches to be used later when the fire gathered strength. And all the while the dog sat and watched him, a certain yearning wistfulness in its eyes, for it looked upon him as the fire-provider, and the fire was slow in coming.

When all was ready, the man reached in his pocket for a second piece of birch-bark. He knew the bark was there, and though he could not feel it with his fingers, he could hear its crisp rustling as he fumbled for it. Try as he would, he could not clutch hold of it. And all the time, in his consciousness, was the knowledge that each instant his feet were freezing. This thought tended to put him in a panic, but he fought against it and kept calm. He pulled up his mittens with his teeth, and threshed his arms back and forth, beating his hands with all his might against his sides. He did this sitting down, and he stood up to do it; and all the while the dog sat in the snow, its wolf-brush of a tail curled around warmly over its forefeet, its sharp wolf-ears pricked forward intently as it watched the man. And the man, as he beat and threshed with his arms and hands, felt a great surge of envy

as he regarded the creature that was warm and secure in its natural covering.

After a time he was aware of the first far-away signals of sensation in his beaten fingers. The faint tingling grew stronger till it evolved into a stinging ache that was excruciating, but which the man hailed with satisfaction. He stripped the mitten from his right hand and fetched forth the birch-bark. The exposed fingers were quickly going numb again. Next he brought out his bunch of sulphur matches. But the tremendous cold had already driven the life out of his fingers. In his effort to separate one match from the others, the whole bunch fell in the snow. He tried to pick it out of the snow, but failed. The dead fingers could neither touch nor clutch. He was very careful. He drove the thought of his freezing feet, and nose, and cheeks, out of his mind, devoting his whole soul to the matches. He watched, using the sense of vision in place of that of touch, and when he saw his fingers on each side of the bunch, he closed them—that is, he willed to close them, for the wires were down, and the fingers did not obey. He pulled the mitten on the right hand, and beat it fiercely against his knee. Then, with both mittened hands, he scooped the bunch of matches, along with much snow, into his lap. Yet he was no better off.

After some manipulation he managed to get the bunch between the heels of his mittened hands. In this fashion he carried it to his mouth. The ice crackled and snapped when by a violent effort he opened his mouth. He drew the lower jaw in, curled the upper lip out of the way, and scraped the bunch with his upper teeth in order to separate a match. He succeeded in getting one, which he dropped on his lap. He was no better off. He could not pick it up. Then he devised a way. He picked it up in his teeth and scratched it on his leg. Twenty times he scratched it before he succeeded in lighting it. As it flamed he held it with his teeth to the birch-bark. But the burning brimstone went up his nostrils and into his lungs, causing him to cough spasmodically. The match fell into the snow and went out.

The oldtimer on Sulphur Creek was right, he thought in the moment of controlled despair that ensued: after fifty below, a man should travel with a partner. He beat his hands, but failed in exciting any sensation. Suddenly he bared both hands, remov-

ing the mittens with his teeth. He caught the whole bunch between the heels of his hands. His arm-muscles not being frozen enabled him to press the hand-heels tightly against the matches. Then he scratched the bunch along his leg. It flared into flame, seventy sulphur matches at once! There was no wind to blow them out. He kept his head to one side to escape the strangling fumes, and held the blazing bunch to the birch-bark. As he so held it, he became aware of sensation in his hand. His flesh was burning. He could smell it. Deep down below the surface he could feel it. The sensation developed into pain that grew acute. And still he endured it, holding the flame of the matches clumsily to the bark that would not light readily because his own burning hands were in the way, absorbing most of the flame.

At last, when he could endure no more, he jerked his hands apart. The blazing matches fell sizzling into the snow, but the birch-bark was alight. He began laying dry grasses and the tiniest twigs on the flame. He could not pick and choose, for he had to lift the fuel between the heels of his hands. Small pieces of rotten wood and green moss clung to the twigs, and he bit them off as well as he could with his teeth. He cherished the flame carefully and awkwardly. It meant life, and it must not perish. The withdrawal of blood from the surface of his body now made him begin to shiver, and he grew more awkward. A large piece of green moss fell squarely on the little fire. He tried to poke it out with his fingers, but his shivering frame made him poke too far, and he disrupted the nucleus of the little fire, the burning grasses and tiny twigs separating and scattering. He tried to poke them together again, but in spite of the tenseness of the effort, his shivering got away from him, and the twigs were hopelessly scattered. Each twig gushed a puff of smoke and went out. The fire-provider had failed. As he looked apathetically about him, his eyes chanced on the dog, sitting across the ruins of the fire from him, in the snow, making restless, hunching movements, slightly lifting one forefoot and then the other, shifting its weight back and forth on them with wistful eagerness and eyeing the fire-provider expectantly.

The sight of the dog put a wild idea into his head. He remembered the tale of the man, caught in a blizzard, who killed a steer, and crawled inside the carcass, and so was saved. He would kill the dog and bury his hands in the warm body until the numbness

went out of them. Then he could build another fire. He spoke to the dog, calling it to him; but in his voice was a strange note of fear that frightened the animal, who had never known the man to speak in such a way before. Something was the matter, and its suspicious nature sensed danger—it knew not what danger, but somewhere, somehow, in its brain arose an apprehension of the man. It flattened its ears down at the sound of the man's voice, and its restless, hunching movements and the liftings and shiftings of its forefeet became more pronounced; but it would not come to the man. He got on his hands and knees and crawled toward the dog. This unusual posture again excited suspicion, and the animal sidled mincingly away.

The man sat up in the snow for a moment and struggled for calmness. Then he pulled on his mittens, by means of his teeth, and got upon his feet. He glanced down at first in order to assure himself that he was really standing up, for the absence of sensation in his feet left him unrelated to the earth. His erect position in itself started to drive the webs of suspicion from the dog's mind; and when he spoke peremptorily, with the sound of whiplashes in his voice, the dog rendered its customary allegiance and came to him. As it came within reaching distance, the man lost his control. His arms flashed out to the dog, and he experienced genuine surprise when he discovered that his hands could not clutch, that there was neither bend nor feeling in the fingers. He had forgotten for the moment that they were frozen and that they were freezing more and more. All this happened quickly, and before the animal could get away, he encircled its body with his arms. He sat down in the snow, and in this fashion held the dog, while it snarled and whined and struggled.

But it was all he could do, hold its body encircled in his arms and sit there. He realized that he could not kill the dog. There was no way to do it. With his helpless hand he could neither draw nor hold his sheath-knife nor throttle the animal. He released it, and it plunged wildly away, with tail between its legs, and still snarling. It halted forty feet away and surveyed him curiously, with ears sharply pricked forward. The man looked down at his hands in order to locate them, and found them hanging on the ends of his arms. It struck him as curious that one should have to use his eyes in order to find out where his hands were. He began threshing his arms back and forth, beating

the mittened hands against his sides. He did this for five minutes, violently, and his heart pumped enough blood up to the surface to put a stop to his shivering. But no sensation was aroused in the hands. He had an impression that they hung like weights on the ends of his arms, but when he tried to run the impression down, he could not find it.

A certain fear of death, dull and oppressive, came to him. This fear quickly became poignant as he realized that it was no longer a mere matter of freezing his fingers and toes, or of losing his hands and feet, but that it was a matter of life and death, with the chances against him. This threw him into a panic, and he turned and ran up the creek-bed along the old, dim trail. The dog joined in behind and kept up with him. He ran blindly, without intention, in fear such as he had never known in his life. Slowly, as he ploughed and floundered through the snow, he began to see things again—the banks of the creek, the old timber-jams, the leafless aspens, and the sky. The running made him feel better. He did not shiver. Maybe, if he ran on, his feet would thaw out; and, anyway, if he ran far enough, he would reach camp and the boys. Without doubt he would lose some fingers and toes and some of his face; but the boys would take care of him, and save the rest of him when he got there. And at the same time there was another thought in his mind that said he would never get to the camp and the boys; that it was too many miles away, that the freezing had too great a start on him and that he would soon be stiff and dead. This thought he kept in the background and refused to consider. Sometimes it pushed itself forward and demanded to be heard, but he thrust it back and strove to think of other things.

It struck him as curious that he could run at all on feet so frozen that he could not feel them when they struck the earth and took the weight of his body. He seemed to himself to skim along above the surface, and to have no connection with the earth. Somewhere he had once seen a winged Mercury, and he wondered if Mercury felt as he felt when skimming over the earth.

His theory of running until he reached camp and the boys had one flaw in it: he lacked the endurance. Several times he stumbled, and finally he tottered, crumpled up, and fell. When he tried to rise, he failed. He must sit and rest, he decided, and

next time he would merely walk and keep on going. As he sat and regained his breath, he noted that he was feeling quite warm and comfortable. He was not shivering, and it even seemed that a warm glow had come to his chest and trunk. And yet, when he touched his nose or cheeks, there was no sensation. Running would not thaw them out. Nor would it thaw out his hands and feet. Then the thought came to him that the frozen portions of his body must be extending. He tried to keep this thought down, to forget it, to think of something else; he was aware of the panicky feeling that it caused, and he was afraid of the panic. But the thought asserted itself, and persisted, until it produced a vision of his body totally frozen. This was too much, and he made another wild run along the trail. Once he slowed down to a walk, but the thought of the freezing extending itself made him run again.

And all the time the dog ran with him, at his heels. When he fell down a second time, it curled its tail over its forefeet and sat in front of him, facing him, curiously eager and intent. The warmth and security of the animal angered him, and he cursed it till it flattened down its ears appeasingly. This time the shivering came more quickly upon the man. He was losing in his battle with the frost. It was creeping into his body from all sides. The thought of it drove him on, but he ran no more than a hundred feet, when he staggered and pitched headlong. It was his last panic. When he had recovered his breath and control, he sat up and entertained in his mind the conception of meeting death with dignity. However, the conception did not come to him in such terms. His idea of it was that he had been making a fool of himself, running around like a chicken with its head cut off—such was the simile that occurred to him. Well, he was bound to freeze anyway, and he might as well take it decently. With this new-found peace of mind came the first glimmerings of drowsiness. A good idea, he thought, to sleep off to death. It was like taking an anaesthetic. Freezing was not so bad as people thought. There were lots worse ways to die.

He pictured the boys finding his body the next day. Suddenly he found himself with them, coming along the trail and looking for himself. And, still with them, he came around a turn in the trail and found himself lying in the snow. He did not belong with himself any more, for even then he was out of himself,

standing with the boys and looking at himself in the snow. It certainly was cold, was his thought. When he got back to the States he could tell the folks what real cold was. He drifted on from this to a vision of the oldtimer on Sulphur Creek. He could see him quite clearly, warm and comfortable.

"You were right, old hoss; you were right," the man mumbled to the oldtimer of Sulphur Creek.

Then the man drowsed off into what seemed to him the most comfortable and satisfying sleep he had ever known. The dog sat facing him and waiting. The brief day drew to a close in a long, slow twilight. There were no signs of a fire to be made, and, besides, never in the dog's experience had it known a man to sit like that in the snow and make no fire. As the twilight drew on, its eager yearning for the fire mastered it, and with a great lifting and shifting of forefeet, it whined softly, then flattened its ears down in anticipation of being chidden by the man. But the man remained silent. Later, the dog whined loudly. And still later it crept close to the man and caught the scent of death. This made the animal bristle and back away. A little longer it delayed, howling under the stars that leaped and danced and shone brightly in the cold sky. Then it turned and trotted up the trail in the direction of the camp it knew, where were the other food-providers and fire-providers.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING THE SHORT-STORY

Canby, Henry Seidel and Dashiell, Alfred: *A Study of the Short Story*

Cobb, Irwin S.: "According to Code"
"The Belled Buzzard"

Coppard, A. E.: *The Collected Tales of A. E. Coppard*

Fitzgerald, F. Scott: "Babylon Revisited"

Freeman, Mary E. Wilkins: "The Revolt of Mother"

Galsworthy, John: "Spindleberries"

Greene, Frederick Stuart: "A Cat of the Canebrake"

Hardy, Thomas: "The Three Strangers"

Hemingway, Ernest: "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber"
"The Snows of Kilimanjaro"

Jewett, Sarah Orne: "A White Heron"
Maupassant, Guy de: "La Mere Sauvage"
"A Piece of String"
Poe, Edgar Allan: "The Cask of Amontillado"
Stevenson, Robert Louis: "Markheim"
Williams, Ben Ames: " 'They Grind Exceeding Small' "

CHAPTER VIII

★

HOW TO READ LITERATURE: THE NOVEL

> Give me a condor's quill! Give me Vesuvius's crater for an inkstand! To produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme.
>
> *Moby Dick*
> by Herman Melville

IN this chapter, the term *literature* is used in its accepted sense, *belles lettres*, meaning the literature of power, to use De Quincey's phrase. The popular conception of the term includes the classics, the great books of past and present time, the literature cherished generation after generation by the passionate minority of readers, the writing with the three-fold appeal to the intellect, the imagination, and the emotions.

The mass of writing of a factual nature provides the reader with a knowledge of his physical and social environment; literature is concerned with the way in which the human spirit impinges on the environment and the way in which the environment influences the human spirit. William Faulkner has his own definition of the only subject of literature: "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat."

Experience is an amorphous mass; literature imposes patterns on the mass, revealing to the reader the purpose, the shape, the scope, the design, the direction, the meaning, the justification of human

experience, according to the vision of each writer. Literature enables the reader to see life steadily and see it whole, according to Matthew Arnold.

The professional reader, who may also be a literary critic and a reviewer of books, and the lay or non-professional reader have much in common; yet they have their differences, too. Perhaps their reading differs more in degree of insight than in kind. At one end of the scale is the professional reader, the critic, who attempts to demonstrate his superiority by carping criticism about everything that he reads; his attitude is habitually negativistic. At the other end of the scale is the professional reader or critic who can discriminate between the good and the worthless and can sense values in what he reads, intellectual, imaginative, emotional, philosophical, spiritual. His rich cultural background and his life-experiences provide him with criteria for judgment and enable him to identify himself with whatever he may read. He is capable, too, of detachment from what he reads and can appraise books with relentless justice. His reading procedure is both analytic and synthetic.

The reading experiences of the professional reader are finally crystallized in reviews published in newspapers, magazines, and books that serve as guides and mentors for the lay reader. The critic who achieves a high plane of artistry has a flexible mind, quick and incisive. Speed or rate of reading is rarely a consideration with the reviewer, for he is responsive to the thought and feeling implicit in what he reads and adjusts his pace according to the implications of the composition.

The reviewer usually has a prodigious memory which serves him when he compares new with old publications. He reads extensively and, as a rule, reads intensively in some particular area of thought and experience.

If the lay reader attains significant proficiency in reading, he understands the principles of acceptable composition though he may not write for publication. He reads book reviews extensively; at times he finds them a stimulant and a guide, and at other times a source of irritation and friction and perhaps an occasion for forthright protest. The professional reader by his insistence on standards of writing and

by his precise nomenclature helps the lay reader to define his standards and to become more precise in his thinking.

The lay reader often postpones reading a review of a book until he has read the book itself and made his own appraisal. This procedure for some readers, however, is somewhat like scorning guide books and the offices of a guide or a dragoman when travelling in an unfamiliar country. The more mature a reader becomes, the better able he will be to arrive at independent judgments. There is an over-lapping of reading, writing, and literary criticism; they complement one another.

The competent reader is always on the alert for distinguishing features that are present in almost all literary writing; the habit of searching for the common features develops the uncommon reader. The features that challenge reader-response may be re-stated:

1. *The central dominating idea; the motif; the goal; the target; the author's purpose; whatever imparts a central vitality to a literary work.*

2. *The organization; the design; the pattern; the blue print; the outline, the skeleton, the framework.*

3. *The mood, the emotional atmosphere, ranging from neutral through all possible variations to a highly charged, consuming emotional state.*

4. *The style, the manner, the flow, the approach, the rhythm that establishes rapport of reader and writer.*

5. *The validity of the book; is it worth reading? Is it worth remembering? Is it convincing? Has it something of lasting value?*

The five minimal considerations can be stated still more briefly:

1. *The central vitality*
2. *The pattern*
3. *The mood*
4. *The style*
5. *The validity*

The astute reader forms the habit of appraising what he reads in terms of these five considerations, but he goes further and appraises a piece of writing precisely in terms of its own *genre*, never content with a vague, temporary reaction to what he reads.

All that the student-reader has learned about the techniques of reading factual material is useful in reading literature. His first obligation is to grasp the meaning of what he reads; his rôle is not one of passive acceptance. He reconstructs the writer's composition somewhat as an orchestra leader makes the composer's manuscript come alive. In some current literary circles, it is fashionable to write poetry and prose that have no meaning; in that case, the reader is absolved from any obligation to make a response. The indispensable elements of literature are concepts that quicken the mind, stimulate the imagination, and enliven the emotions of the reader.

The scope of this book does not permit a discussion of the techniques involved in reading all kinds of literature. Here are outlined some suggestions that adult lay readers have found useful in helping them to read with increased understanding the literature designed to appeal to the mature mind.

The kind of writing that makes the widest appeal to the American reading public is fiction, particularly the novel, a literary type that has many facets. Each kind of novel requires the appropriate approach by the reader. He may miss fire completely if he uses a technique of reading that is foreign to what he attempts to read; he must recognize the conventions of a particular kind of novel and accept them, just as in opera he accepts the convention that the characters sing what they wish to communicate. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* involves the reader in one type of novel, and Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* in another. Mrs. Woolf explores the hidden springs of thought and action in one day of Mrs. Dalloway's life. Thackeray, using the dramatic narrative method of composition, presents a panorama of an historical epoch in English history.

Some readers never want anything but the "once upon a time" kind of novel, the story-telling of stirring action with little attempt by the author to interpret what happens below the surface. They read along the line of least resistance. The kind of novel that a reader

enjoys depends upon his temperament and his literary taste, though he should not be averse to exploring various kinds. The Bourbon order of mind is as undesirable in novel-reading as in politics.

True to the deepest longings of the human heart, everyone wants experience, real and vicarious. A good novel has the flavor of experience. Some readers want only those novels that deal with lively, exciting, on-the-surface experience. Something must happen on every page, and the whole action must move rapidly to a striking climax, when the reader closes the book with the satisfaction that something has been completed. Such novels give little attention to the delineation of character, though every story of exciting action must have even a minimum of character portrayal. The novels of Sir Walter Scott, some of Robert Louis Stevenson's, all of Cooper's and Alexandre Dumas', Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, are examples of the dramatic, narrative novel that demand little of the reader except that he keep the plot straight, note the chronological sequence of events, and compile a mental *Who's Who* of the characters. Probably no reader of novels ever outgrows his love of a good story, and it would be unfortunate if he did. Elizabeth Drew,* the critic, has expressed her approval of a good story and has suggested how it should be read.

> The natural and primitive way to read a novel is to read it for its story and its characters; to become absorbed in it as we would in the observation of a piece of 'real life,' and to ask no further questions about it. And after all, that is what the novelist wants us to do. As Sterne says, 'I would go fifty miles on foot to kiss the hand of that man whose generous heart will give up the reins of his imagination into the author's hands—be pleased he knows not why, and cares not wherefore.' The novelist is creating an illusion of life for his readers, and he wants us to accept it, to become submerged in it, to see it and hear it and feel it as he himself has seen and heard and felt it, to believe in it wholeheartedly, to want it to go on forever! And that, I am sure, is the way to get the most enjoyment from reading a novel. But what is important, and what is the whole purpose of training in this field, and of not reading novels entirely in this delightful primi-

* From *The Enjoyment of Literature* by Elizabeth Drew. Copyright, 1935, by W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.

tive way, is that we should believe whole-heartedly in the happenings and characters of good novels and not bad ones; that we should be absorbed and delighted in the company of a rich humanity and a vigorous or unusual mind, and not in that of false values and feeble sentiment.

But the mature reader wants to read novels that portray experience and at the same time interpret it. Life may seem disordered, haphazard, fragmentary, puzzling, bewildering. The great novelists impose patterns or designs on experience and enable the perceptive reader to see order in the apparent disorderliness of life. The artist's function is to bring order out of life's chaos. The great novels are concrete instances of the operation of the law of cause and effect in human affairs, obedient to the inexorable logic that we reap what we sow, whether it be figs or thistles. The great novel is truthful. It does not compromise with truth; it does not mislead the reader. It is beside the point to discuss the morality or the immorality of a novel. The question is: Does it tell the truth about human experience? Does the novel follow events through to their inescapable logical consequences?

The novelists, Hugo, Balzac, George Eliot, Hawthorne, Hardy, Dickens, Thackeray, Galsworthy, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, have not flinched from portraying life truthfully; they have enlisted art in the service of truth. Light, frothy fiction does not follow events through to their inevitable conclusion; such reading damages the reader because it subjects him to a distortion of the truth, and militates against the reader's maturity of mind and spirit. Like the body, the mind and spirit do grow by what they feed on.

The major concern of the mature reader of novels is with the author's theme or thesis, the animating force behind the plot and elaborate action. The thesis may be a philosophical, or ethical, or spiritual truth; it may be the author's observation of human conduct. The mature reader recognizes the thesis early in his reading of a novel and notes the various incidents and crises that implement the thesis. He becomes, like Tennyson's Ulysses, a part of all that he meets. The reader is caught up in large totalities of meaning and expands his experience into an ever expanding world.

A good novel-reading experience is to read several novels by the same author, especially if he has incorporated in a number of works a distinct philosophy of life, each novel voicing a similar interpretation of life but utilizing a different chain of events to make the philosophy concrete and vivid. Such reading demands of the reader the skill to cope with large masses of human experience but to hold always to the theme or thesis that directs the reader's understanding and imagination.

In his Preface to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy quotes two lines from *King Lear*, which could have been printed on the title page as containing the essence of Hardy's philosophy set forth in the novel. Tess was in the grip of a relentness fate; she was helpless to stem the tide of the disasters that swept her to the gallows. Hardy quotes:

> As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
> They kill us for their sport.

What happens to the men and women caught in the web of Hardy's weaving? Eustacia in *The Return of the Native* fights unscrupulously for happiness; what is the outcome? Tess, the beautiful innocent maiden, is betrayed by a wicked seducer; note her fate. Sergeant Troy in *Far from the Madding Crowd* has a love in every town; what happens to him and the women? Fate takes various forms in contending with Hardy's characters. To Hardy, nature is "the taciturn and ironic spectator of the ephemeral human insects who struggle on its surface."

For a study of the operation of caprice and irony in human affairs, it is recommended that the following books be read in the suggested order:

1. *Far from the Madding Crowd*
2. *The Return of the Native*
3. *The Mayor of Casterbridge*
4. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*
5. *Jude the Obscure*

Hardy's thesis furnishes the reader with a chart to guide him in reading his greatest novels: "Any assertion of the individual will is

likely to be opposed by more powerful forces which, beyond man's ken and outside his control, will urge his desires to disaster."*

Perhaps no novelist has more consistently identified himself with a thesis than did Nathaniel Hawthorne. His preoccupation is with sin and its effect on the individual man or woman. The central vitality of *The House of the Seven Gables* is bound up with the assertion that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children even unto the third and the fourth generation. To state the thesis in terms of New England witchcraft, a curse may rest understandably on a family for generations, but Hawthorne of the nineteenth century gives the hopeful assurance that under favorable conditions the curse may be lifted. Implicit in his thesis is a plan for reading *The House of the Seven Gables*. The Pyncheons, the house, the spring of water, the family portraits, the wallpaper, the climbing rose, the door-bell, the chickens—everything is under a curse. Then new life is counter-arrayed against the accursed state of affairs, and a mitigating compromise is effected. The novelist deftly portrays the action in two worlds, the supernatural and the natural. Always a prosaic, commonsense explanation of every incident is intimated. God may have given Judge Pyncheon blood to drink, but it was rumored, said the novelist, that the Judge had had a stroke. The reader looks for the detailed evidence of degeneration and decay but is alert to a reversal of the gloomy regime. Hawthorne's plan or outline is as definite as a blue print.

The Scarlet Letter rays out from a thesis that directs the reading. Again the subject is sin—sin confessed and sin concealed, presented affirmatively in Hester Prynne whose wrong-doing is publicly labelled, and presented negatively in Arthur Dimmesdale whose concealed wrong-doing has a biting, corrosive effect on him. Roger Chillingworth exerts his psychiatric power in sinister fashion to bring the minister's offence to the surface. The reader, taking his cue from the author, involuntarily adjusts his reading to the technique of contrast, following the two parallel lines represented by Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale. The domination of the thesis creates a remark-

* Introduction by William T. Brewster to *Far from the Madding Crowd* by Thomas Hardy. Copyright, 1918, by Harper and Brothers.

able degree of unity; for the reader, every detail fits into a design. He grasps a totality of meaning.

Many readers have shied away from Hudson's *Green Mansions*, thinking that the story was so remote from reality as to be fantastic; the events that take place in tropical Guiana seem far removed from the everyday world; yet the author expects the reader to accept the events as occurring within the bounds of possibility, even probability. Hudson's theme* emerges distinctly, phrased admirably by John Galsworthy:

> *Green Mansions* symbolizes the yearning of the human soul for the attainment of perfect love and beauty in this life—the impossible perfection which we must all learn to see fall from its high tree and be consumed in the flames, as was Rima the bird-girl.

In *The Purple Land, Idle Days in Patagonia, The Land's End,* and in other works, Hudson discloses the spirit of what he saw, believing that "The sense of the beautiful is God's best gift to the human soul."

To Let, the last novel in *The Forsyte Saga*, follows the pattern of forces in collision portrayed in the preceding novels of that famous trilogy. Galsworthy had a thesis and every novel in the trilogy was a demonstration proving the thesis to be sound, Q E D. A conversation between young Jolyon Forsyte and Philip Bosinney, the architect, defines the theme of *The Forsyte Saga:*

> "A Forsyte," replied young Jolyon, "is not an uncommon animal. There are hundreds among the members of the Club. Hundreds out there in the streets; you meet them wherever you go!"
>
> "And how do you tell them, may I ask?" said Bosinney.
>
> "By their sense of property. A Forsyte takes a practical—one might say a commonsense—view of things, and a practical view of things is based on a sense of property. . . . We are, of course, all of us, the slaves of property, and I admit that it's a question of degree, but what I call a 'Forsyte' is decidedly more than less a slave of property. He knows a good thing, he knows a safe

* Introduction by John Galsworthy to *Green Mansions* by W. H. Hudson. Published by Boni and Liveright.

thing, and his grip on property—it doesn't matter whether it be wives, houses, money, or reputation—is his hallmark."*

The theme, the exaggerated conception of the importance of property, implies tragic consequences for many people. In each novel of the trilogy Galsworthy furnishes concrete instances that make his thesis convincing. In *To Let* of *The Forsyte Saga,* the two lovers, Fleur and Jon, are under the shadow of the family feud. The novel does not end with their death, as in *Romeo and Juliet,* but with the marriage of Fleur to Michael Mont, and with Jon faithful to his mother, Irene Forsyte. On the title-page, Galsworthy quoted two lines from *Romeo and Juliet:*

> From out the fatal loins of those two foes
> A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life.

Those two lines give the reader his clue to the movement of events and its climax. Every incident, every speech, points to a conclusion that is star-crossed; the story of the lovers' unhappiness is told in the large framework of the evil of Forsyte possessiveness.

On the title page of *Silas Marner,* George Eliot quoted two lines of Wordsworth's, to which the whole story boils down:

> A child more than any other gift to man
> Brings hope and forward-looking thoughts.

Silas Marner lost his faith in man, woman, the church, and God; he was reduced to the lowest possible terms. His restoration to a life of confidence and faith was accomplished by the unconscious influence exerted by a child. The novel is a concrete instance of the truth of Wordsworth's observation on life. The mature reader will not be distracted by George Eliot's philosophical digressions but will hold fast to the main line of the theme.

To discipline one's self to search for the theme of a great novel is the indispensable first step in becoming a mature reader. It is a discipline that can be accomplished by reading and reflection and a sincere effort to interpret what is read. The theme gives the clue to

* *The Forsyte Saga* by John Galsworthy. Copyright, 1922, by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

the unity of the whole design; every part must fit into the whole structure.

The word, ordeal, in the title, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, furnishes the reader his clue to the appropriate reading procedure. Richard's life was a series of ordeals. He grew to manhood, not the perfect being anticipated by his father, Sir Austin Feverel, but a broken man confronted with the obligation to direct his own son's education. In a framework of aphorisms and disquisitions, philosophical and pedagogical, is set an account of a series of ordeals that culminate in disaster. Sir Austin failed to rear a perfect being; he was not infallible.

Tolstoy's great novel, *War and Peace*, meets the demand that Sir Osbert Sitwell* makes on the great novel:

> For a great novel must reveal an enormous panorama with a sudden light illuminating for us things we had not seen: it can be an enormous view inside the mind, like Proust's, or outside, like Tolstoy's. It must be the interpretation of a whole world.

War and Peace, with its fourteen hundred pages, makes considerable demand on even the mature reader. It lacks the compact organization of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* that has an easily identifiable beginning, middle, and end—a novel that imparts to the reader a sense of satisfaction with events that come full circle. But *War and Peace*, in organization the antithesis of *Madame Bovary*, is a canvas crowded with men and women so numerous that a listing and identification of each are welcome. Tolstoy's passionate interest in people, his encyclopedic knowledge, his reflections on life and death and immortality, his accurate picture of feudal nobility of Russia, with a detailed account of four families over a span of approximately fifteen years, the description of the battle of Borodino so lacking in pomp and circumstance—all this in a framework of Napoleon's invasion of Russia comes close to being a panorama of a large part of the world in 1812.

Even a mature reader might hesitate at the reading demands made by *War and Peace*. Fortunately, a recent edition of the novel is

* *New Writing and Daylight*, edited by John Lehman. A New Directions Book.

equipped with an introduction by Mr. Clifton Fadiman that serves as a chart of directions for the reader.*

It is difficult to state the theme of *War and Peace*, so many ideas receive emphasis. Tolstoy expresses his contempt for war; he believed that men's lives are controlled by destiny, not blind chance. Mr. Mark Van Doren commented: "I think that he can be said to have hated nothing that ever happened." It is not significant that Tolstoy laid the scene of his novel in Russia, *circa* 1812. Tolstoy wrote about Russians as people, and thus he wrote about universal man wherever and whenever he lived. The novel is true to the truth of all human life, not merely to the Russians of 1812.

The reading of *War and Peace*, an epic in modern novel form, prepares the way for reading Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, a novel that protests against the edicts of society. According to Thomas Mann, its theme is the Biblical pronouncement: "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." Anna is scourged by society for illicit love; the expiation of her sin should have been entrusted to God, according to Tolstoy. Destiny closes in on Anna; her suicide seems inevitable. But in reading the novel, the mature reader will reflect on everything that Konstantin Levin, one of the characters, says, for he voices the convictions that Tolstoy held at the time he wrote the novel, approximately 1875. *Anna Karenina* is an indictment of society; Tolstoy argues in Anna's defense. The reader, noting the indictment, follows Tolstoy's argument. Does he prove his case?

There is a large body of profitable and diverting reading grouped under the heading: historical novels. The returns from reading the best of historical novels are large. The analytically minded reader searches for the secret of a good historical novel. Probably all readers of literature read a work in terms of themselves; they see themselves as actors in all that they read. The writer is shrewd if he makes the identification as easy as possible. In some way, the reader must feel himself a part of what he meets in the novel. The psychologist has no difficulty in explaining the grip of the western story, the detective story, the mystery story, the impossible romantic story on the appar-

* *War and Peace*, by Leo Tolstoy, The Inner Sanctum Edition, with a Foreword by Clifton Fadiman. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1942.

ently conventional person who leads a rigidly systematic existence, his energies expended on an unglamorous way of making a living; he finds release and escape and perhaps a sense of superiority, through identification. Thackeray employed good psychology and fine craftsmanship in the historical novel, *Henry Esmond.*

Thackeray, like Hardy and Sir Walter Scott, had an acute historic sense. There are few good historical novels because it is hard to make them convincing. The novelist writes about a past age; yet the reader must be made to feel that he has much in common with the characters, who may wear fancy dress and swear strange oaths. The writer of convincing historical novels must emphasize some quality or feature that helps the reader to feel a sense of nearness to a by-gone period. John Erskine accomplished the feat of endowing gods and goddesses and men and women of Greek mythology with the familiar characteristics of people we know. Sir Walter Scott's Quentin Durward, a brash young Scotsman, crashes into the court of Louis XI and is guilty of the social errors of any young man of today with similar temperament and opportunity; it may be added that Quentin displays the resourcefulness of present-day youth in extricating himself from embarrassing predicaments. The genius of Homer did not fail him in creating Ulysses, the extrovert, to whom exciting danger was a necessity, and Achilles, the spoiled young man sulking in his tent because he could not have what he wanted. Ulysses and Achilles are amply represented in modern circles; they are true to type. The reader must find something familiar in a historical novel; else he is repelled by its incongruity. The sense of familiarity may be created by the scene of action in familiar territory, or by the same kind of psychology that inspires action today and inspired it thousands of years ago.

Thackeray in *Henry Esmond* skillfully chose a period close to his own times. The novel purports to be the Memoirs of Henry Esmond or Harry, actually the fourth Viscount who married the widow of Francis Esmond (called the fourth Viscount). The Preface to the Memoirs creates the illusion of having been written in Virginia in 1778 by Rachel Esmond Warrington, the daughter of the two chief characters in Henry Esmond, Lady Castlewood and Harry Esmond. The date of the preface, 1778, is reasonably near the eighteen-fifties, when Thackeray wrote the novel. The places where the action

occurred and the final association with Virginia satisfy the sense of nearness of place. Thackeray conceived himself to be the lineal descendant of General Webb, the rival and enemy of Marlborough, characters in *Henry Esmond.*

The illusion of the immediacy of time is created, although the era of the novel was the late seventeenth century, by having the story told in the first person by the chief actor in the story, who at the time he wrote his Memoirs had been transformed into a polished gentleman of the Augustan age of English literature and history.

Thackeray creates the historical atmosphere by an occasional archaism but especially by the formality and dignity that pervaded the late seventeenth century. The reader follows a story that has few, if any, language barriers. The characters conform to the superficial aspects of seventeenth century life, but at best they belonged to the eighteen-fifties. Thackeray's contemporaries were impressed by the spirit of modernity that pervaded *Henry Esmond.*

In still another way, *Henry Esmond* emphasizes the note of modernity. It is a novel of domestic life in a two-fold sense. Historically, *Henry Esmond* is a romance; Lady Castlewood was twenty-four when she fell in love with Harry who was sixteen. It was after years of jealousies and separation and penance, that the pair finally went to Virginia to enjoy their declining years together.

Thackeray told the story of romantic love in a way that satisfied all the Victorian conventions of romantic love. His treatment was affected by his own experience with Mrs. Brookfield, and the love story in the novel parallels in many respects Thackeray's experience, though laws and conventions prevented Thackeray's marriage to Mrs. Brookfield.

Henry Esmond is a great historical novel. Its art invites the reader's response: its immediacy in time and place, the account in the first person, the lack of vocabulary barriers, the faithfulness to the psychology of men and women whatever the era—all transport the reader to a by-gone era, yet he remains in the mid-Victorian age.

Thackeray said of *Esmond:* "Here is the very best I can do. . . . I stand by this book and am willing to leave it, when I go, as my card."

A backward glance over the development of the novel will reveal a shifting of emphasis in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on

events and the study of character to the present-day emphasis on the study of consciousness, according to Elizabeth Drew:*

> The individual consciousness is seen to be the focus of all experience, and the individual consciousness is an infinitely complicated thing, neither homogeneous nor coherent nor logical. As a result, the novelists who possess this fresh vision of a rearranged scale of values, are impatient of the neat human patterns into which their predecessors move these formless masses of diverse impulses and memories.

It is the understanding of the new vision of life, under the domination of psychology, that gives the mature reader, with an open mind, his clue to reading *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf, who knew the art of arresting the passing moment. Aldous Huxley in *Point Counterpoint* employed the technique of the all-revealing moment. Other experimenters in the technique of fiction who make large demands on readers schooled in the conventional novel of events and character study are Joyce, Huxley, Faulkner, Hemingway, Proust. Some readers, even the most mature and sophisticated, prefer fiction that deals with familiar affairs and human relationships. The novel of the stream-of-consciousness type seems to them to view life as incoherent and disintegrating. The novels of Virginia Woolf furnish a good approach to the new, experimental fiction, provided the reader does not expect the regular pattern of plot and character development.

The reader of fiction can explore the whole of life, expressed and implied. There are novels for all tastes and inclinations. The essential thing is to become absorbed in a novel as we do in real life experience and to try to find its meaning.

Only four kinds of novels have been mentioned; there are many more, each requiring a particular reading approach:

1. *The narrative, dramatic novel; the once-upon-a-time story.*
2. *The study of character, with the story element limited.*

* *The Enjoyment of Literature* by Elizabeth Drew. Copyright, 1935, by W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.

3. *The historical novel that re-creates a by-gone era.*
4. *The stream-of-consciousness novel.*

In addition to the novels already mentioned, the following stand comparison with the greatest. The list is not meant to be exhaustive.

Austen, Jane: *Pride and Prejudice*
Balzac, Honoré de: *Eugénie Grandet* and *Le Père Goriot*
Bennett, Arnold: *The Old Wives' Tale*
Brontë, Charlotte: *Jane Eyre*
Brontë, Emily: *Wuthering Heights*
Butler, Samuel: *The Way of All Flesh*
Cather, Willa: *Shadows on the Rock*
Cervantes, Miguela de: *The History and Adventures of the Renowned Don Quixote*
Conrad, Joseph: *Lord Jim*
Crane, Stephen: *The Red Badge of Courage*
Defoe, Daniel: *Moll Flanders*
Dickens, Charles: *David Copperfield*
Eliot, George: *Middlemarch*
Glasgow, Ellen: *Vein of Iron*
Howells, William Dean: *The Rise of Silas Lapham*
Hugo, Victor: *Les Misérables*
James, Henry, *The Ambassadors*
Melville, Herman: *Moby Dick*
Billy Budd, Foretopman
Sterne, Laurence: *A Sentimental Journey*
Thackeray, William Makepeace: *Vanity Fair*
Trollope, Anthony: *Chronicles of Barsetshire*
Wharton, Edith: *Ethan Frome*

The World of Books

is the most remarkable creation of man.
Nothing else he builds lasts.
Monuments fall,
Nations perish,
Civilizations grow old and die out
And after an era of darkness

New races build others,
But in the world of books are volumes
That have seen this happen again and again
And yet live on,
Still young,
Still as fresh as the day they were written,
Still telling men's hearts
Of the hearts of men centuries dead.

Clarence Day

CHAPTER IX

★

HOW TO READ ESSAYS; LETTERS; BIOGRAPHY

> The manner in which one single ray of light, one single precious hint, will clarify and energize the whole mental life of him who receives it is among the most wonderful and heavenly of intellectual phenomena.
>
> *Literary Taste*
> by Arnold Bennett

TO read the informal essay with pleasure is an indication of maturity of mind and spirit. If the uncritical reader persists in reading the informal, reflective essay with an open mind and heart, he will find the association with the authors of essays a rewarding experience. The reader needs the perceptive, appreciative, imaginative understanding of people, a liking of them—an interest in all kinds of people. The writer of essays is able to see the significance of apparently the insignificant, skillful like Hilaire Belloc "in spinning some fragile trifle into an enduring fabric. Through him moments become timeless; the merest gesture of a man becomes character, and with so light a touch that one is scarcely conscious of the development of any theme."*

Essay is a felicitous name for the kind of writing that is an attempt by which the author essays to put into words fugitive thoughts and

* By Harold L. Tinker in *Essays Yesterday and Today*. The Macmillan Company. Copyright, 1934.

feelings. The essay is the least structured of all kinds of writing, not excepting the familiar letter. Lyric poetry, essays, letters belong in the category of confessional literature. Montaigne, one of the great essayists wrote: "It is myself that I portray."

Because essays are so subjective in style and tone as well as content, the reader of essays becomes well acquainted with essayists. It is inevitable that the nature of essayists should emerge from the printed page. The reader of essays associates old china, old books, old friends, good wine, a game of whist, dream children with Charles Lamb—"Gentle Charles." Some of his sentences are a page long, running on like Tennyson's brook, proving him the "cordial-minded man and matchless fireside companion," as Lamb described Leigh Hunt. With effortless ease, the essayists record their admiration, their ridicule, their indignation, their gayety, their grief, their disappointment, but always—almost always—with instinctive obedience to the amenities of good breeding. The essayist reveals his philosophy of life, sometimes subtly, sometimes boldly, sometimes with the unequivocal directness of a preacher or moralist. Keats said of William Hazlitt: "He is a good damner, and if ever I am damned I should like to have him damn me."

The theme of *The Art of Book Reading* is the conception of reading as a collaborative act of author and reader. It is essential that the reader should understand the kind of person an essayist is, if author and reader understand and appreciate each other. If the reader enjoys conversation that is an interchange of ideas, good spirited conversation punctuated with repartee, or quiet, reflective conversation with stretches of understanding silence; if he has breadth of mind and good breeding; if he appreciates finished craftsmanship; if he is capable of warm friendships; if he can endure the vicissitudes of life with a fair degree of serenity of spirit, then he will read essays, and re-read at intervals certain essays that become indispensable to his well-being. But of essays, especially, it is true, "De gustibus non disputandum."

Readers have large potentialities and should never regard essays as having a degree of preciousness that prevents them from being "too bright or good for human nature's daily food"; fortunately we do grow by what we feed on.

The essay* by Hilaire Belloc catches up a familiar experience and expands it into something universal. The narrator goes home; the hay needs cutting; a sturdy Englishman helps him with the mowing. That is all that happens so far as the observer can see. But an inner world of universal scope comes into being. The reader turns to the essay, bent on finding out what kind of man the author is, and following his train of thought, which may be congenial to the reader or it may not be congenial. The reader owes the writer at least a slow second reading and after that, some reflection. What sort of revelation of himself does Belloc confess?

THE MOWING OF A FIELD

by Hilaire Belloc

There is a valley in South England remote from ambition and from fear, where the passage of strangers is rare and unperceived, and where the scent of the grass in summer is breathed only by those who are native to that unvisited land. The roads to the Channel do not traverse it; they choose upon either side easier passes over the range. One track alone leads up through it to the hills, and this is changeable: now green where men have little occasion to go, now a good road where it nears the homesteads and the barns. The woods grow steep above the slopes; they reach sometimes the very summit of the heights, or, when they cannot attain them, fill in and clothe the coombs. And, in between, along the floor of the valley, deep pastures and their silence are bordered by lawns of chalky grass and the small yew trees of the Downs.

The clouds that visit its sky reveal themselves beyond the one great rise, and sail, white and enormous, to the other, and sink beyond that other. But the plains above which they have traveled and the Weald to which they go, the people of the valley cannot see and hardly recall. The wind, when it reaches such fields, is no longer a gale from the salt, but fruitful and soft, an inland breeze; and those whose blood was nourished here feel in that wind the fruitfulness of our orchards and all the life that all things draw from the air.

* From *Hills and the Sea* by Hilaire Belloc. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers, New York, 1925.

In this place, when I was a boy, I pushed through a fringe of beeches that made a complete screen between me and the world, and I came to a glade called No Man's Land. I climbed beyond it; and I was surprised and glad, because from the ridge of that glade, I saw the sea. To this place very lately I returned.

The many things that I recovered as I came up the countryside were not less charming than when a distant memory had enshrined them, but much more. Whatever veil is thrown by a longing, recollection had not intensified nor even made more mysterious the beauty of that happy ground; not in my very dreams of morning had I, in exile, seen it more beloved or more rare. Much also that I had forgotten now returned to me as I approached—a group of elms, a little turn of the parson's wall, a small paddock beyond the graveyard close, cherished by one man, with a low wall of very old stone guarding it all round. And all these things fulfilled and amplified my delight, till even the good vision of the place, which I had kept so many years, left me and was replaced by its better reality. "Here," I said to myself, "is a symbol of what some say is reserved for the soul: pleasure of a kind which cannot be imagined save in a moment when at last it is attained."

When I came to my own gate and my own field, and had before me the house I knew, I looked around a little (though it was already evening), and I saw that the grass was standing as it should stand when it is ready for the scythe. For in this, as in everything that a man can do—of those things at least which are very old—there is an exact moment when they are done best. And it has been remarked of whatever rules us that it works blunderingly, seeing that the good things given to a man are not given at the precise moment when they would have filled him with delight. But, whether this be true or false, we can choose the just turn of the seasons in everything we do of our own will, and especially in the making of hay. Many think that hay is best made when the grass is thickest; and so they delay until it is rank and in flower, and has already heavily pulled the ground. And there is another false reason for delay, which is wet weather. For very few will understand (though it comes year after year) that we have rain always in South England between the sickle and the scythe, or say just after the weeks of east wind are over. First we have a week of sudden warmth, as though the

south had come to see us all; then we have the weeks of east and southeast wind; and then we have more or less of that rain of which I spoke, and which always astonishes the world. Now it is just before, or during, or at the very end of, that rain—but not later—that grass should be cut for hay. True, upland grass, which is always thin, should be cut earlier than the grass in the bottoms and along the water meadows; but not even the latest, even in the wettest seasons, should be left (as it is) to flower and even to seed. For what we get when we store our grass is not a harvest of something ripe, but a thing just caught in its prime before maturity; as witness that our corn and straw are best yellow, but our hay is best green. So also Death should be represented with a scythe and Time with a sickle; for Time can take only what is ripe, but Death comes always too soon. In a word, then, it is always much easier to cut grass too late than too early; and I, under that evening and come back to these pleasant fields, looked at the grass and knew that it was time. June was in full advance; it was the beginning of that season when the night has already lost her foothold of the earth and hovers over it, never quite descending, but mixing sunset with the dawn.

Next morning, before it was yet broad day, I awoke, and thought of the mowing. The birds were already chattering in the trees beside my window, all except the nightingale, which had left and flown away to the Weald, where he sings all summer by day as well as by night in the oaks and the hazel spinneys, and especially along the little river Adur, one of the rivers of the Weald. The birds and the thought of the mowing had awakened me, and I went down the stairs and along the stone floors to where I could find a scythe; and when I took it from its nail, I remembered how, fourteen years ago, I had last gone out with my scythe, just so, into the fields at morning. In between that day and this were many things, cities and armies, and a confusion of books, mountains and the desert, and horrible great breadths of sea.

When I got out into the long grass, the sun was not yet risen, but there were already many colors in the eastern sky, and I made haste to sharpen my scythe, so that I might get to the cutting before the dew should dry. Some say that it is best to wait till all the dew has risen, so as to get the grass quite dry from the very first. But, though it is an advantage to get the grass quite

dry, yet it is not worth while to wait till the dew has risen. For, in the first place, you lose many hours of work (and those the coolest), and next—which is more important—you lose that great ease and thickness in cutting which comes of the dew. So I at once began to sharpen my scythe.

There is an art also in the sharpening of the scythe, and it is worth describing carefully. Your blade must be dry, and that is why you will see men rubbing the scythe-blade with grass before they whet it. Then also your rubber must be quite dry, and on this account it is a good thing to lay it on your coat and keep it there during all your day's mowing. The scythe you stand upright, with the blade pointing away from you, and put your left hand firmly on the back of the blade, grasping it: then you pass the rubber first down one side of the blade-edge and then down the other, beginning near the handle and going on to the point and working quickly and hard. When you first do this you will, perhaps, cut your hand; but it is only at first that such an accident will happen to you.

To tell when the scythe is sharp enough, this is the rule. First the stone clangs and grinds against the iron harshly; then it rings musically to one note; then, at last, it purrs as though the iron and stone were exactly suited. When you hear this, your scythe is sharp enough; and I, when I heard it that June dawn, with everything quite silent except the birds, let down the scythe and bent myself to mow.

When one does anything anew, after so many years, one fears very much for one's trick or habit. But all things once learnt are easily recoverable, and I very soon recovered the swing and power of the mower. Mowing well and mowing badly—or rather not mowing at all—are separated by very little; as is also true of writing verse, of playing the fiddle, and of dozens of other things, but of nothing more than of believing. For the bad or young or untaught mower without tradition, the mower Promethean, the mower original and contemptuous of the past, does all these things: He leaves great crescents of grass uncut. He digs the point of the scythe hard into the ground with a jerk. He loosens the handles and even the fastening of the blade. He twists the blade with his blunders, he blunts the blade, he chips it, dulls it, or breaks it clean off at the tip. If anyone is standing by, he cuts him in the ankle. He sweeps up into the air

wildly, with nothing to resist his stroke. He drags up earth with the grass, which is like making the meadow bleed. But the good mower who does things just as they should be done and have been for a hundred thousand years, falls into none of these fooleries. He goes forward very steadily, his scythe-blade just barely missing the ground, every grass falling; the swish and rhythm of his mowing are always the same.

So great an art can be learnt only by continual practice; but this much is worth writing down, that, as in all good work, to know the thing with which you work is the core of the affair. Good verse is best written on good paper with an easy pen, not with a lump of coal on a whitewashed wall. The pen thinks for you; and so does the scythe mow for you if you treat it honorably and in a manner that makes it recognize its service. The manner is this. You must regard the scythe as a pendulum that swings, not as a knife that cuts. A good mower puts no more strength into his stroke than into his lifting. Again, stand up to your work. The bad mower, eager and full of pain, leans forward and tries to force the scythe through the grass. The good mower, serene and able, stands as nearly straight as the shape of the scythe will let him, and follows up every stroke closely, moving his left foot forward. Then also let every stroke get well away. Mowing is a thing of ample gestures, like drawing a cartoon. Then, again, get yourself into a mechanical and repetitive mood: be thinking of anything at all but your mowing, and be anxious only when there seems some interruption to the monotony of the sound. In this, mowing should be like one's prayers—all of a sort and always the same, and so made that you can establish a monotony and work them, as it were, with half your mind: that happier half, the half that does not bother.

In this way, when I had recovered the art after so many years, I went forward over the field, cutting lane after lane through the grass, and bringing out its most secret essences with the sweep of the scythe until the air was full of odors. At the end of every lane I sharpened my scythe and looked back at the work done, and then carried my scythe down again upon my shoulder to begin another. So, long before the bell rang in the chapel above me—that is, long before six o'clock, which is the time for the Angelus—I had many swathes already lying in order parallel like soldiery; and the high grass yet standing, making a great

contrast with the shaven part, looked dense and high. As it says in the Ballad of Val-ès-Dunes, where—

> The tall son of the Seven Winds
> Came riding out of Hither-hythe,

and his horse-hoofs (you will remember) trampled into the press and made a gap in it, and his sword (as you know)

> was like a scythe
> In Arcus when the grass is high
> And all the swathes in order lie,
> And there's the bailiff standing by
> A-gathering of the tithe.

So I mowed all that morning, till the houses awoke in the valley, and from some of them rose a little fragrant smoke, and men began to be seen.

I stood still and rested on my scythe to watch the awakening of the village, when I saw coming up to my field a man whom I had known in older times, before I had left the Valley.

He was of that dark silent race upon which all the learned quarrel, but which, by whatever meaningless name it may be called—Iberian, or Celtic, or what you will—is the permanent root of all England, and makes England wealthy and preserves it everywhere, except perhaps in the Fens and in a part of Yorkshire. Everywhere else you will find it active and strong. These people are intensive; their thoughts and their labors turn inward. It is on account of their presence in these islands that our gardens are the richest in the world. They also love low rooms and ample fires and great warm slopes of thatch. They have, as I believe, an older acquaintance with the English air than any other of all the strains that make up England. They hunted in the Weald with stones, and camped in the pines of the greensand. They lurked under the oaks of the upper rivers, and saw the legionaries go up, up the straight paved road from the sea. They helped the few pirates to destroy the towns, and mixed with those pirates and shared the spoils of the Roman villas, and were glad to see the captains and the priests destroyed. They remain; and no admixture of the Frisian pirates, or the Breton, or the Angevin and Norman conquerors, has very much affected their cunning eyes.

To this race, I say, belonged the man who now approached

me. And he said to me, "Mowing?" And I answered, "Ar." Then he also said, "Ar," as in duty bound; for so we speak to each other in the Stenes of the Downs.

Next he told me that, as he had nothing to do, he would lend me a hand; and I thanked him warmly, or, as we say, "kindly." For it is a good custom of ours always to treat bargaining as though it were a courteous pastime; and though what he was after was money, and what I wanted was his labor at the least pay, yet we both played the comedy that we were free men, the one granting a grace and the other accepting it. For the dry bones of commerce, avarice and method and need, are odious to the Valley; and we cover them up with a pretty body of fiction and observances. Thus, when it comes to buying pigs, the buyer does not begin to decry the pig and the vendor to praise it, as is the custom with lesser men; but tradition makes them do business in this fashion:—

First the buyer will go up to the seller when he sees him in his own steading, and, looking at the pig with admiration, the buyer will say that rain may or may not fall, or that we shall have snow or thunder, according to the time of the year. Then the seller, looking critically at the pig, will agree that the weather is as his friend maintains. There is no haste at all; great leisure marks the dignity of their exchange. And the next step is, that the buyer says: "That's a fine pig you have there, Mr. ——" (giving the seller's name). "Ar, powerful fine pig." Then the seller, saying also "Mr." (for twin brothers rocked in one cradle give each other ceremonious observance here), the seller, I say, admits, as though with reluctance, the strength and beauty of the pig, and falls into deep thought. Then the buyer says, as though moved by a great desire, that he is ready to give so much for the pig, naming half the proper price, or a little less. Then the seller remains in silence for some moments; and at last begins to shake his head slowly, till he says: "I don't be thinking of selling the pig, anyways." He will also add that a party only Wednesday offered him so much for the pig—and he names about double the proper price. Thus all ritual is duly accomplished; and the solemn act is entered upon with reverence and in a spirit of truth. For when the buyer uses this phrase: "I'll tell you what I *will* do," and offers within half a crown of the pig's value, the seller replies that he can refuse him nothing,

and names half a crown above its value; the difference is split, the pig is sold, and in the quiet soul of each runs the peace of something accomplished.

Thus do we buy a pig or land or labor or malt or lime, always with elaboration and set forms; and many a London man has paid double and more for his violence and his greedy haste and very unchivalrous higgling. As happened with the land at Underwaltham, which the mortgagees had begged and implored the estate to take at twelve hundred and had privately offered to all the world at a thousand, but which a sharp direct man, of the kind that makes great fortunes, a man in a motor-car, a man in a fur coat, a man of few words, bought for two thousand three hundred before my very eyes, protesting that they might take his offer or leave it; and all because he did not begin by praising the land.

Well, then, this man I spoke of offered to help me, and he went to get his scythe. But I went into the house and brought out a gallon jar of small ale for him and for me; for the sun was now very warm, and small ale goes well with mowing. When we had drunk some of this ale in mugs called "I see you," we took each a swathe, he a little behind me because he was the better mower; and so for many hours we swung, one before the other, mowing and mowing at the tall grass of the field. And the sun rose to noon and we were still at our mowing; and we ate food, but only for a little while, and we took again to our mowing. And at last there was nothing left but a small square of grass, standing like a square of linesmen who keep their formation, tall and unbroken, with all the dead lying around them when the battle is over and done.

Then for some little time I rested after all those hours; and the man and I talked together, and a long way off we heard in another field the musical sharpening of a scythe.

The sunlight slanted powdered and mellow over the breadth of the valley; for day was nearing its end. I went to fetch rakes from the steading; and when I had come back the last of the grass had fallen, and all the field lay flat and smooth, with the very green short grass in lanes between the dead and yellow swathes.

These swathes we raked into cocks to keep them from the dew against our return at daybreak; and we made the cocks as tall

and steep as we could, for in that shape they best keep off the dew, and it is easier also to spread them after the sun has risen. Then we raked up every straggling blade, till the whole field was a clean floor for the tedding and the carrying of the hay next morning. The grass we had mown was but a little over two acres; for that is all the pasture on my little tiny farm.

When we had done all this, there fell upon us the beneficent and deliberate evening; so that as we sat a little while together near the rakes, we saw the valley more solemn and dim around us, and all the trees and hedgerows quite still, and held by a complete silence. Then I paid my companion his wage, and bade him a good night, till we should meet in the same place before sunrise.

He went off with a slow and steady progress, as all our peasants do, making their walking a part of the easy but continual labor of their lives. But I sat on, watching the light creep around towards the north and change, and the waning moon coming up as though by stealth behind the woods of No Man's Land.

The classification of "Quality"* is a matter of diverse opinions. It is a narrative of a series of incidents that achieve a climax; it has well defined characters; certainly it is invested with a highly wrought emotional atmosphere; an unmistakable theme can be deduced; and the poignant conflict holds the reader in a tense grip. Yet other readers will find its chief significance in what it reveals of the character and personality of Galsworthy, especially his social philosophy. They will see in "Quality" an affirmation of the convictions voiced in his novels and his plays. Perhaps to Galsworthy, the episode of the bootmakers is a concrete instance of his conviction, by implication, that an ideal is worth dying for. It is hard to read "Quality" without getting a lump in one's throat, testimony to the tense, emotional quality that pervades this rare piece of literary composition. Whether "Quality" is a narrative or an essay matters little. Its appeal is to the best instincts in the reader.

* From *The Inn of Tranquillity* by John Galsworthy; copyright, 1912, by Charles Scribner's Sons; 1940, by Ada Galsworthy; used by permission of the publishers.

QUALITY

by John Galsworthy

I knew him from the days of my extreme youth, because he made my father's boots; inhabiting with his elder brother two little shops let into one, in a small by-street—now no more, but then most fashionably placed in the West End.

That tenement had a certain quiet distinction; there was no sign upon its face that he made for any of the Royal Family—merely his own German name of Gessler Brothers; and in the window a few pairs of boots. I remember that it always troubled me to account for those unvarying boots in the window, for he made only what was ordered, reaching nothing down, and it seemed so inconceivable that what he made could ever have failed to fit. Had he bought them to put there? That, too, seemed inconceivable. He would never have tolerated in his house leather on which he had not worked himself. Besides, they were too beautiful—the pairs of pumps, so inexpressibly slim, the patent leathers with cloth tops, making water come into one's mouth, the tall brown riding-boots with marvelous sooty glow, as if, though new, they had been worn a hundred years. Those pairs could only have been made by one who saw before him the Soul of Boot—so truly were they prototypes, incarnating the very spirit of all footwear. These thoughts, of course, came to me later, though even when I was promoted to him, at the age of perhaps fourteen, some inkling haunted me of the dignity of himself and brother. For to make boots—such boots as he made—seemed to me then, and still seems to me, mysterious and wonderful.

I remember well my shy remark, one day, while stretching out to him my youthful foot:

"Isn't it awfully hard to do, Mr. Gessler?"

And his answer, given with a sudden smile from out of the sardonic redness of his beard: "Id is an Ardt!"

Himself, he was a little as if made of leather, with his yellow crinkly face, and crinkly reddish hair and beard, and neat folds slanting down his cheeks to the corners of his mouth, and his guttural and one-toned voice; for leather is a sardonic substance, and stiff and slow of purpose. And that was the character of his face, save that his eyes, which were gray-blue, had in them

the simple gravity of one secretly possessed by the Ideal. His elder brother was so very like him—though watery, paler in every way, with a great industry—that sometimes in early days I was not quite sure of him until the interview was over. Then I knew that it was he, if the words, "I will ask my brudder," had not been spoken, and that, if they had, it was the elder brother.

When one grew old and wild and ran up bills, one somehow never ran them up with Gessler Brothers. It would not have seemed becoming to go in there and stretch out one's foot to that blue iron-spectacled face, owing him for more than—say—two pairs, just the comfortable reassurance that one was still his client.

For it was not possible to go to him very often—his boots lasted terribly, having something beyond the temporary—some, as it were, essence of boot stitched into them.

One went in, not as into most shops, in the mood of: "Please serve me, and let me go!" but restfully, as one enters a church; and, sitting on the single wooden chair, waited—for there was never anybody there. Soon—over the top edge of that sort of well—rather dark, and smelling soothingly of leather—which formed the shop, there would be seen his face, or that of his elder brother, peering down. A guttural sound, and the tip-tap of bast slippers beating the narrow wooden stairs, and he would stand before one without coat, a little bent, in leather apron, with sleeves turned back, blinking—as if awakened from some dream of boots, or like an owl surprised in daylight and annoyed at this interruption.

And I would say: "How do you do, Mr. Gessler? Could you make me a pair of Russia leather boots?"

Without a word he would leave me, retiring whence he came, or into the other portion of the shop, and I would continue to rest in the wooden chair, inhaling the incense of his trade. Soon he would come back, holding in his thin, veined hand a piece of gold-brown leather. With eyes fixed on it, he would remark: "What a beaudiful biece!" When I, too, had admired it, he would speak again: "When do you wand dem?" And I would answer: "Oh! As soon as you conveniently can." And he would say: "Tomorrow fordnighd?" Or if he were his elder brother: "I will ask my brudder!"

Then I would murmur: "Thank you! Good-morning, Mr.

Gessler." "Goot-morning!" he would reply, still looking at the leather in his hand. And as I moved to the door, I would hear the tip-tap of his bast slippers restoring him, up the stairs, to his dream of boots. But if it were some new kind of foot-gear that he had not yet made me, then indeed he would observe ceremony—divesting me of my boot and holding it long in his hand, looking at it with eyes at once critical and loving, as if recalling the glow with which he had created it, and rebuking the way in which one had disorganized this masterpiece. Then, placing my foot on a piece of paper, he would two or three times tickle the outer edges with a pencil and pass his nervous fingers over my toes, feeling himself into the heart of my requirements.

I cannot forget that day on which I had occasion to say to him: "Mr. Gessler, that last pair of town walking-boots creaked, you know."

He looked at me for a time without replying, as if expecting me to withdraw or qualify the statement, then said:

"Id shouldn'd 'ave greaked."

"It did, I'm afraid."

"You goddem wed before dey found demselves?"

"I don't think so."

At that he lowered his eyes, as if hunting for memory of those boots, and I felt sorry I had mentioned this grave thing.

"Zend dem back!" he said; "I will look at dem."

A feeling of compassion for my creaking boots surged up in me, so well could I imagine the sorrowful long curiosity of regard which he would bend on them.

"Zome boods," he said slowly, "are bad from birdt. If I can do noding wid dem, I dake dem off your bill."

Once (once only) I went absent-mindedly into his shop in a pair of boots bought in an emergency at some large firm's. He took my order without showing me any leather, and I could feel his eyes penetrating the interior integument of my foot. At last he said:

"Dose are nod my boods."

The tone was not one of anger, nor of sorrow, not even of contempt, but there was in it something quiet that froze the blood. He put his hand down and pressed a finger on the place where the left boot, endeavoring to be fashionable, was not quite comfortable.

"Id 'urds you dere," he said. "Dose big virms 'ave no self-

respect. Drash!" And then, as if something had given way within him, he spoke long and bitterly. It was the only time I ever heard him discuss the conditions and hardships of his trade.

"Dey get id all," he said, "dey get id by adverdisement, not by work. Dey dake id away from us, who lofe our boods. Id gomes to this—bresently I haf no work. Every year id gets less—you will see." And looking at his lined face I saw things I had never noticed before, bitter things and bitter struggle—and what a lot of gray hairs there seemed suddenly in his red beard!

As best I could, I explained the circumstances of the purchase of those ill-omened boots. But his face and voice made a so deep impression that during the next few minutes I ordered many pairs! Nemesis fell! They lasted more terribly than ever. And I was not able conscientiously to go to him for nearly two years.

When at last I went I was surprised that outside one of the two little windows of his shop another name was painted, also that of a bootmaker—making, of course, for the Royal Family. The old familiar boots, no longer in dignified isolation, were huddled in the single window. Inside, the now contracted well of the one little shop was more scented and darker than ever. And it was longer than usual, too, before a face peered down, and the tip-tap of the bast slippers began. At last he stood before me, and, gazing through those rusty iron spectacles, said:

"Mr. ——, isn'd id?"

"Ah! Mr. Gessler," I stammered, "but your boots are really *too* good, you know! See, these are quite decent still!" And I stretched out to him my foot. He looked at it.

"Yes," he said, "beople do nod wand good boods, id seems."

To get away from his reproachful eyes and voice I hastily remarked: "What have you done to your shop?"

He answered quietly: "Id was too exbensif. Do you wand some boods?"

I ordered three pairs, though I had wanted only two, and quickly left. I had, I know not quite what feeling of being part, in his mind, of a conspiracy against him; or not perhaps so much against him as against his idea of boot. One does not, I suppose, care to feel like that; for it was again many months before my next visit to his shop, paid, I remember, with the feeling: "Oh! well, I can't leave the old boy—so here goes! Perhaps it'll be his elder brother!"

For his elder brother, I knew, had not character enough to reproach me, even dumbly.

And, to my relief, in the shop there did appear to be his elder brother, handling a piece of leather.

"Well, Mr. Gessler," I said, "how are you?"

He came close, and peered at me.

"I am breddy well," he said slowly; "but my elder brudder is dead."

And I saw that it was indeed himself—but how aged and wan! And never before had I heard him mention his brother. Much shocked, I murmured: "Oh! I am sorry!"

"Yes," he answered, "he was a good man, he made a good bood; but he is dead." And he touched the top of his head, where the hair had suddenly gone as thin as it had been on that of his poor brother, to indicate, I suppose, the cause of death. "He could nod ged over losing de oder shop. Do you wand any boods?" And he held up the leather in his hand: "Id's a beaudiful biece."

I ordered several pairs. It was very long before they came—but they were better than ever. One simply could not wear them out. And soon after that I went abroad.

It was over a year before I was again in London. And the first shop I went to was my old friend's. I had left a man of sixty, I came back to find one of seventy-five, pinched and worn and tremulous, who genuinely, this time, did not at first know me.

"Oh! Mr. Gessler," I said, sick at heart; "how splendid your boots are! See, I've been wearing this pair nearly all the time I've been abroad; and they're not half worn out, are they?"

He looked long at my boots—a pair of Russia leather, and his face seemed to regain its steadiness. Putting his hand on my instep, he said:

"Do dey vid you here? I 'ad drouble wid dat bair, I remember."

I assured him that they had fitted beautifully.

"Do you wand any boods?" he said. "I can make dem quickly; id is a slack dime."

I answered: "Please, please! I want boots all round—every kind!"

"I vill make a vresh model. Your food must be bigger." And with utter slowness, he traced round my foot, and felt my toes, only once looking up to say:

"Did I dell you my brudder was dead?"

To watch him was quite painful, so feeble had he grown; I was glad to get away.

I had given those boots up, when one evening they came. Opening the parcel, I set the four pairs out in a row. Then one by one I tried them on. There was no doubt about it. In shape and fit, in finish and quality of leather, they were the best he had ever made me. And in the mouth of one of the town walking-boots I found his bill. The amount was the same as usual, but it gave me quite a shock. He had never before sent it in until quarter day. I flew downstairs and wrote a check, and posted it at once with my own hand.

A week later, passing the little street, I thought I would go in and tell him how splendidly the new boots fitted. But when I came to where his shop had been, his name was gone. Still there, in the window, were the slim pumps, the patent leathers with cloth tops, the sooty riding-boots.

I went in, very much disturbed. In the two little shops—again made into one—was a young man with an English face.

"Mr. Gessler in?" I said.

He gave me a strange, ingratiating look.

"No, sir," he said, "no. But we can attend to anything with pleasure. We've taken the shop over. You've seen our name, no doubt, next door. We make for some very good people."

"Yes, yes," I said, "but Mr. Gessler?"

"Oh!" he answered; "dead."

"Dead! But I only received these boots from him last Wednesday week."

"Ah!" he said; " a shockin' go. Poor old man starved 'imself."

"Good God!"

"Slow starvation, the doctor called it! You see he went to work in such a way! Would keep the shop on; wouldn't have a soul touch his boots except himself. When he got an order, it took him such a time. People won't wait. He lost everybody. And there he'd sit, goin' on and on—I will say that for him—not a man in London made a better boot! But look at the competition! He never advertised! Would 'ave the best leather, too, and do it all 'imself. Well, there it is. What could you expect with his ideas?"

"But starvation——!"

"That may be a bit flowery, as the sayin' is—but I know myself he was sittin' over his boots day and night, to the very last. You see, I used to watch him. Never gave 'imself time to eat; never had a penny in the house. All went in rent and leather. How he lived so long I don't know. He regular let his fire go out. He was a character. But he made good boots."

"Yes," I said, "he made good boots."

"The Great Lesson of the Trawnbeighs"* by Charles Macomb Flandrau is probably more essay than short-story. It is a story of a personal experience; it recounts incidents in chronological order; yet, the narrative element could be reduced to one brief paragraph, and a critical reading will emphasize the fact that the author's chief aim was probably not to tell a story. His own phrase, the great lesson of the Trawnbeighs, gives a clue to his purpose. With rapier thrusts he pierces the armor of the traditional Englishman. He employs irony, good natured ridicule, penetrating insight, the sophisticated man's knowledge of the world, in introducing readers to the Trawnbeighs. But the perceptive reader learns a good deal about Flandrau himself. He unwittingly makes his contribution to the literature of the confessional. One reader may find the article an interesting travel sketch; another may get insight into life in Mexico; still another may agree or disagree vehemently with the author's delineation of the typical Englishman. Undoubtedly, some readers will see this piece of literary composition as an essay built on a slight narrative, interesting chiefly for its revelation of human nature—the author's and the Englishman's, taking their cue from the question implied in the title: What was the great lesson of the Trawnbeighs?

THE GREAT LESSON OF THE TRAWNBEIGHS

by Charles Macomb Flandrau

When my first New Year's party dispersed, I walked back to the center of the town with a man who had lived for many years in Mexico, who had been everywhere and had done everything, and who seemed to know something funny or tragic or scan-

* From *Viva Mexico* by Charles Macomb Flandrau. Reprinted by permission of Mrs. Blair Flandrau and Harper and Brothers.

dalous about everybody in the world. He loved to talk, to describe, to recall; and while we had some drinks together at a café under the sky-blue portales, he aroused my interest in people I never had heard of and never should see. He told me, among other things, about the Trawnbeighs.

This, as nearly as I can remember, is what he told me about the Trawnbeighs:

The Trawnbeighs, he said, were the sort of peole who "dressed for dinner," even when, as sometimes happened, they had no dinner in the house to dress for. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that the Trawnbeighs were English. Indeed, on looking back, I often feel that to my first apparently flippant statement it is unnecessary to add *anything*. For to one who knew Mr. and Mrs. Trawnbeigh, Edwina, Violet, Maud, and Cyril, it was the first and last word on them; their alpha and omega, together with all that went between. Not that the statement is flippant—far from it. There is in it a seriousness, a profundity, an immense philosophic import. At times it has almost moved me to lift my hat, very much as one does for reasons of state, or religion, or death.

This, let me hasten to explain, is not at all the way I feel when I put on evening clothes myself, which I do at least twice out of my every three hundred and sixty-five opportunities. No born American could feel that way about his own dress coat. He sometimes thinks he does; he often—and isn't it boresome!—pretends he does, but he really doesn't. As a matter of unimportant fact, the born American may have "dressed" every evening of his grown-up life. But if he found himself on an isolated, played-out Mexican coffee and vanilla finca, with a wife, four children, a tiled roof that leaked whenever there was a "norther," an unsealed sala through the bamboo partitions of which a cold, wet wind howled sometimes for a week at a time, with no money, no capacity for making any, no "prospects" and no cook—under these depressing circumstances it is impossible to conceive of an American dressing for dinner every night at a quarter before seven in any spirit but one of ghastly humor.

With the Trawnbeighs' performance of this sacred rite, however, irony and humor had nothing to do. The Trawnbeighs had a robust sense of fun (so, I feel sure, have pumpkins and turnips and the larger varieties of the nutritious potato family);

but humor, when they didn't recognize it, bewildered them, and it always struck them as just a trifle underbred when they did.

Trawnbeigh had come over to Mexico—"come out from England," he would have expressed it—as a kind of secretary to his cousin, Sir Somebody Something, who was building a harbor or a railway or a canal (I don't believe Trawnbeigh himself ever knew just what it was) for a British company down in the hot country. Mrs. Trawnbeigh, with her young, was to follow on the next steamer a month later; and as she was in mid-ocean when Sir Somebody suddenly died of yellow fever, she did not learn of this inopportune event until it was too late to turn back. Still I doubt whether she would have turned back if she could. For, as Trawnbeigh once explained to me, at a time when they literally hadn't enough to eat (a hail storm had not only destroyed his coffee crop, but had frozen the roots of most of his trees, and the price of vanilla had fallen from ten cents a bean to three and a half), leaving England at all, he explained, had necessitated "burning their bridges behind them." He did not tell me the nature of their bridges, nor whether they had made much of a blaze. In fact, that one vague, inflammatory allusion was the nearest approach to a personal confidence Trawnbeigh was ever known to make in all his fifteen years of Mexican life.

The situation, when he met Mrs. Trawnbeigh and the children on the dock at Vera Cruz, was extremely dreary, and at the end of a month it had grown much worse, although the Trawnbeighs apparently didn't think so. They even spoke and wrote as if their affairs were "looking up a bit." For, after a few weeks of visiting among kindly compatriots at Vera Cruz and Rebozo, Mrs. Trawnbeigh became cook for some English engineers (there were seven of them) in a sizzling, mosquitoey, feverish mudhole on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The Trawnbeighs didn't call it "cook," neither did the seven engineers. I don't believe the engineers even thought of it as cook. (What Mrs. Trawnbeigh thought of it will never be known.) How *could* they when that lady, after feeding the four little Trawnbeighs (or rather the four young Trawnbeighs; they had never been little) a meal I think they called "the nursery tea," managed every afternoon, within the next two hours, first to create out of nothing a perfectly edible dinner for nine persons, and, secondly, to receive them all at seven forty-five in a red-striped, lemon

satin ball gown (it looked like poisonous wall paper), eleven silver bangles, a cameo necklace, and an ostrich tip sprouting from the top of her head. Trawnbeigh, too, was in evening clothes. And they didn't call it cooking; they spoke of it as "looking after the mess" or "keeping an eye on the young chaps' livers." Nevertheless, Mrs. Trawnbeigh, daughter of the late the Honorable Cyril Cosby Godolphin Dundas and the late Clare Walpurga Emmeline Moate, cooked—and cooked hard—for almost a year; at the end of which time she was stricken with what she was pleased to refer to as "a bad go of fevah."

Fortunately, they were spared having to pass around the hat, although it would have amounted to that if Trawnbeigh hadn't, after the pleasant English fashion, come into some money. In the United States people know to a cent what they may expect to inherit, and then they sometimes don't get it; but in England there seems to be an endless succession of retired and unmarried army officers who die every little while in Jermyn Street and leave two thousand pounds to a distant relative they have never met. Something like this happened to Trawnbeigh, and in the prospect of his legacy he was able to pull out of the Tehuantepec mudhole and restore his wife to her usual state of health in the pure and bracing air of Rebozo.

Various things can be done with two thousand pounds, but just what *shall* be done ought to depend very largely on whether they happen to be one's first two thousand or one's last. Trawnbeigh, however, invested his ("interred" would be a more accurate term) quite as if they never would be missed. The disposition to be a country gentleman was in Trawnbeigh's blood. Indeed, the first impression one received from the family was that everything they did was in their blood. It never seemed to me that Trawnbeigh had immediately sunk the whole of his little fortune in an old, small, and dilapidated coffee place so much because he was dazzled by the glittering financial future the shameless owner (another Englishman, by the way) predicted for him, as because to own an estate and live on it was, so to speak, his natural element. He had tried, while Mrs. Trawnbeigh was cooking on the Isthmus, to get "something to do." But there was really nothing in Mexico he *could* do. He was splendidly strong, and in the United States he very cheerfully, and with no loss of self-respect or point of view, would have temporarily

shoveled wheat or coal, or driven a team, or worked on the street force, as many another Englishman of noble lineage has done before and since; but in the tropics an Anglo-Saxon cannot be a day laborer. He can't because he can't. And there was in Mexico no clerical position open to Trawnbeigh because he did not know Spanish. (It is significant that after fifteen consecutive years of residence in the country, *none* of the Trawnbeighs knew Spanish.) To be, somehow and somewhere, an English country gentleman of a well-known, slightly old-fashioned type, was as much Trawnbeigh's destiny as it is the destiny of, say, a polar bear to be a polar bear or a camel to be a camel. As soon as he got his two thousand pounds he became one.

When I first met them all he had been one for about ten years. I had recently settled in Trawnbeigh's neighborhood, which in Mexico means that my ranch was a hard day-and-a-half ride from his, over roads that are not roads, but merely ditches full of liquefied mud on the level stretches, and ditches full of assorted boulders on the ascent. So, although we looked neighborly on a small map, I might not have had the joy of meeting the Trawnbeighs for years if my mule hadn't gone lame one day when I was making the interminable trip to Rebozo. Trawnbeigh's place was seven miles from the main road, and as I happened to be near the parting of the ways when the off hind leg of Catalina began to limp, I decided to leave her with my mozo at an Indian village until a pack train should pass by (there is always some one in a pack train who can remove a bad shoe), while I proceeded on the mozo's mule to the Trawnbeighs'. My usual stopping place for the night was five miles farther on, and the Indian village was—well, it was an Indian village. Time and again I had been told of Trawnbeigh's early adventures, and I felt sure he could "put me up" (as he would have said himself) for the night. He "put me up" not only that night, but as my mozo didn't appear until late the next afternoon, a second night as well. And when I at last rode away, it was with the feeling of having learned from the Trawnbeighs a great lesson.

In the first place they couldn't have expected me; they couldn't possibly have expected anyone. And it was a hot afternoon. But as it was the hour at which people at "home" dropped in for tea, Mrs. Trawnbeigh and her three plain, heavy looking daughters were perfectly prepared to dispense hospitality

to any number of mythical friends. They had on hideous but distinctly "dressy" dresses of amazing stamped materials known as "summer silks," and they were all four tightly laced. Current fashion in Paris, London, and New York by no means insisted on small, smooth, round waists, but the Trawnbeigh women had them because (as it gradually dawned on me) to have had any other kind would have been a concession to anatomy and the weather. To anything so compressible as one's anatomy, or as vulgarly impartial as the weather, the Trawnbeighs simply did not concede. I never could get over the feeling that they all secretly regarded weather in general as a kind of popular institution, of vital importance only to the middle class. Cyril, an extremely beautiful young person of twenty-two, who had been playing tennis (by himself) on the asoleadero, was in "flannels," and Trawnbeigh admirably looked the part in gray, middle-aged riding things, although, as I discovered before leaving, their stable at the time consisted of one senile burro with ingrowing hoofs.

From the first it all seemed too flawless to be true. I had never visited in England, but I doubt if there is another country whose literature gives one so definite and lasting an impression of its "home life." Perhaps this is because the life of families of the class to which the Trawnbeighs belong proceeds in England by such a series of definite and traditional episodes. In a household like theirs, the unexpected must have a devil of a time in finding a chance to happen. For, during my visit, absolutely nothing happened that I hadn't long chuckled over in making the acquaintance of Jane Austen, Thackeray, George Eliot, and Anthony Trollope; not to mention Ouida (it was Cyril, of course, who from time to time struck the Ouida note), and the more laborious performances of Mrs. Humphrey Ward. They all of them did at every tick of the clock precisely what they ought to have done. They were a page, the least bit crumpled, torn from "Half Hours with the Best Authors," and cast, dear Heaven! upon a hillside in darkest Mexico.

Of course we had tea in the garden. There wasn't any garden, but we nevertheless had tea in it. The house would have been cooler, less glaring, and free from the venomous little rodadoras that stung the backs of my hands full of microscopic polka dots; but we all strolled out to a spot some fifty yards away where a

bench, half a dozen shaky, homemade chairs, and a rustic table were most imperfectly shaded by three tattered banana trees.

"We love to drink tea in the dingle dangle," Mrs. Trawnbeigh explained. How the tea tray itself got to the "dingle dangle," I have only a general suspicion, for when we arrived it was already there, equipped with caddy, cozy, a plate of buttered toast, a pot of strawberry jam, and all the rest of it. But try as I might, I simply could not rid myself of the feeling that at least two footmen had arranged it all and then discreetly retired; a feeling that also sought to account for the tray's subsequent removal, which took place while Trawnbeigh, Cyril, Edwina, and I walked over to inspect the asoleadero and washing tanks. I wanted to look back; but something (the fear, perhaps, of being turned into a pillar of salt) restrained me.

With most English-speaking persons in that part of the world, conversation has to do with coffee, coffee and—coffee. The Trawnbeighs, however, scarcely touched on the insistent topic. While we sat on the low wall of the dilapidated little asoleadero we discussed pheasant shooting and the "best places" for haberdashery and "Gladstone bags." Cyril, as if it were but a matter of inclination, said he thought he might go over for the shooting that year; a cousin had asked him "to make a seventh." I never found out what this meant and didn't have the nerve to ask.

"Bertie shoots the twelfth, doesn't he?" Edwina here inquired.

To which her brother replied, as if she had shown a distressing ignorance of some fundamental date in history, like 1066 or 1215, "Bertie *always* shoots the twelfth."

The best place for haberdashery in Mr. Trawnbeigh's opinion was "the Stores." But Cyril preferred a small shop in Bond Street, maintaining firmly, but with good humor, that it was not merely, as "the pater," insisted, because the fellow charged more, but because one didn't "run the risk of seeing some beastly bounder in a cravat uncommonly like one's own." Trawnbeigh, as a sedate parent bordering on middle age, felt obliged to stand up for the more economical "Stores," but it was evident that he really admired Cyril's exclusive principles and approved of them. Edwina cut short the argument with an abrupt question.

"I say," she inquired anxiously, "has the dressing bell gone yet?" The dressing bell hadn't gone, but it soon went. For Mr. Trawnbeigh, after looking at his watch, bustled off to the house

and rang it himself. Then we withdrew to our respective apartments to dress for dinner.

"I've put you in the north wing, old man; there's always a breeze in the wing," my host declared as he ushered me into a bamboo shed they used apparently for storing corn and iron implements of an agricultural nature. But there was also in the room a recently made-up cot with real sheets, a tin bath tub, hot and cold water in two earthenware jars, and an empty packing case upholstered in oilcloth. When Trawnbeigh spoke of this last as a "wash-hand-stand," I knew I had indeed strayed from life into the realms of mid-Victorian romance.

The breeze Trawnbeigh had referred to developed in the violent Mexican way, while I was enjoying the bath tub, into an unmistakable norther. Water fell on the roof like so much lead and then sprang off (some of it did) in thick, round streams from the tin spouts; the wind screamed in and out of the tiles overhead, and through the "north wing's" blurred windows the writhing banana trees of the "dingle dangle" looked like strange things one sees in an aquarium. As soon as I could get into my clothes again—a bath was as far as I was able to live up to the Trawnbeigh ideal—I went into the sala where the dinner table was already set with a really heart-rending attempt at splendor. I have said that nothing happened with which I had not a sort of literary acquaintance; but I was wrong. While I was standing there wondering how the Trawnbeighs had been able all those years to keep it up, a window in the next room blew open with a bang. I ran in to shut it; but before I reached it, I stopped short and, as hastily and quietly as I could, tiptoed back to the "wing." For the next room was the kitchen and at one end of it Trawnbeigh, in a shabby but perfectly fitting dress-coat, his trousers rolled up halfway to his knees, was patiently holding an umbrella over his wife's sacred dinner gown, while she—bebangled, becameoed, beplumed, and stripped to the buff—masterfully cooked our dinner on the brasero.

To me it was all extremely wonderful, and the wonder of it did not lessen during the five years in which, on my way to and from Rebozo, I stopped over at the Trawnbeighs' several times a year. For, although I knew that they were often financially all but down and out, the endless red tape of their daily life never struck me as being merely a pathetic bluff. Their rising bells and

dressing bells, their apparent dependence on all sorts of pleasant accessories that simply did not exist, their occupations (I mean those on which I did not have to turn a tactful back, such as "botanizing," "crewel work," painting horrible water colors and composing long lists of British-sounding things to be "sent out from the Stores"), the informality with which we waited on ourselves at luncheon and the stately, punctilious manner in which we did precisely the same thing at dinner, the preordained hour at which Mrs. Trawnbeigh and the girls each took a candle and said good night, leaving Trawnbeigh, Cyril, and me to smoke a pipe and "do a whisky peg" (Trawnbeigh had spent some years in India), the whole inflexibly insular scheme of their existence was more, infinitely more, than a bluff. It was a placid, tenacious clinging to the straw of their ideal in a great, deep sea of poverty, discomfort, and isolation. And it had its reward.

For after fourteen years of Mexican life, Cyril was almost exactly what he would have been had he never seen the place; and Cyril was the Trawnbeigh's one asset of immense value. He was most agreeable to look at, he was both related to and connected with many of the most historical-sounding ladies and gentlemen in England, and he had just the limited, selfish, amiable outlook on the world in general that was sure (granting the other things) to impress Miss Irene Slapp of Pittsburgh as the height of both breeding and distinction.

Irene Slapp had beauty and distinction of her own. Somehow, although they all "needed the money," I don't believe Cyril would have married her if she hadn't. Anyhow, one evening in the City of Mexico he took her in to dinner at the British Legation where he had been asked to dine as a matter of course, and before the second entrée, Miss Slapp was slightly in love with him and very deeply in love with the scheme of life, the standard, the ideal, or whatever you choose to call it, he had inherited and had been brought up, under staggering difficulties, to represent.

"The young beggar has made a pot of money in the States," Trawnbeigh gravely informed me after Cyril had spent seven weeks in Pittsburgh—whither he had been persuaded to journey on the Slapp's private train.

"And, you know I've decided to sell the old place," he casually remarked a month or so later. "Yes, yes," he went on, "the young people are beginning to leave us." (I hadn't noticed any signs of

impending flight on the part of Edwina, Violet, and Maud.) "Mrs. Trawnbeigh and I want to end our days at home. Slapp believes there's gold on the place—or would it be petroleum? He's welcome to it. After all, I've never been fearfully keen on business."

And I rode away pondering, as I always did, on the great lesson of the Trawnbeighs.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING ESSAYS

Brown, John Mason: *Seeing Things* (Series)
De Quincey, Thomas: "On Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*"
Eliot, T. S.: *Literature and the Modern World*
Emerson, Ralph Waldo: "Self-Reliance"
"Gifts"
Erskine, John: "On Reading Great Books"
(In *The Delight of Great Books*)
Hudson, W. H.: "A Traveller in Little Things"
Lamb, Charles: "Old China"
"Dream Children: A Reverie"
"Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist"
Livingston, Sir Richard: "Some Tasks for Education"
Macaulay, Rose: "A Casual Commentary"
Morley, Christopher: *Essays*
Newman, John Henry: "What Is a University?"
Repplier, Agnes: "Points of Friction"
Stevenson, Robert Louis: "An Apology for Idlers"
"Aes Triplex"
Thoreau, Henry David: "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"
Woolf, Virginia: *The Common Reader*

LETTERS

The Letter of the familiar, personal type, like the informal essay, defies definition but invites description. It resembles the kind of essay perfected by Lamb and Stevenson, being informal, and, appar-

ently, artless and unpremeditated. It belongs to the literature of self-revelation. Letters are the quintessence of man's life, or, as James Russell Lowell phrased it, "the real inside of him." They are the expression of a mood and succeed so far as the writer is able to capture a thing so fleeting, and put it on paper. A good letter has the keen edge of talk, and, in addition, facility of style. To quote from Dr. Johnson's Dictionary: "The stile of letters ought to be free, easy, and natural; as near approaching to familiar conversation as possible: the two best qualities in conversation are good humour and good breeding; those letters are therefore certainly the best that show the most of these two qualities."

The distinguishing characteristics of letters give the reader his clue to understanding and appreciation. The first concern is to get acquainted with the writer of the letter and second to infer the nature of the recipient of the letter, for two people write a letter—the one who writes it and the one who reads it. Jane Carlyle instructed her husband to write "all about yourself all to myself." The content of letters varies with the personalities of the writer and the recipient. George Saintsbury in *A Letter Book* reminds us of the salient features of all good letters: good breeding, ease, fluency, ready sympathy, and active imagination.

The following letter* is by Franklin K. Lane (1864-1921) who belonged to the days of the old order that passed into history in 1918. Among his correspondents were Theodore Roosevelt, Lawrence Abbott, Elihu Root, Woodrow Wilson, and Walter H. Page. With his brilliant mind, his keen interest in people, and a talent for words, it was natural that he should be a great letter-writer.

FRANKLIN K. LANE TO WILLIAM PHELPS ENO

Saugatuck, July 5 (1920)

Here I am at your desk looking out of your window into your trees, up the gentle rise of your formal garden into the brilliant crown of rambler roses above the stone gateway. This is a very delightful picture. The sun is just beginning to pour into the garden. He is looking through the apple trees and having hard

* *The Letters of Franklin K. Lane*, edited by Anne Wintermute Lane and Louise Herrick Wall. Copyright, 1922, by Anne W. Lane. Published by Houghton, Mifflin Company.

work to make even a splash of golden green upon the lawn, but the silver spruce and the tiara of roses get the full measure of his morning smile and are doing their best to show that they understand, appreciate, and are glad. Oh, it is a great morning!

And on the water side it has been even more stimulating. I have walked along the stone wall, the water is down, very low, the boat is stranded, like some sleeping animal, with its tether lying loose along the pebbly strand. The gulls are crying to each other that there is promise of a gullet full. Nearer shore the fish are leaping—only one or two I think but they make just enough noise to make one realize that there is life in the smooth water, that it is more than a splendid silver mirror for the sun which streams across it. I disturbed a solitary king-fisher as I went out to the wharf. He rose from his perch upon the rope, circled about for a minute and then settled back, on his watch for breakfast.

It is altogether lovely, a quiet, gentle, kindly morning, such as you have often seen, no doubt, when Judah Rock is making its giant fight to rise triumphant from the sea.

But this is not a bit of geologic prophecy nor a Chapter I to a love story, that I am writing. This is a bread-and-butter letter. I have been your guest and I am telling you that I have enjoyed myself. But you, of course, wish something more than the bald statement that I like your place and that your bread was good and your butter sweet. Yes, you deserve more, for this place is an expression of yourself. No one can be here and not see you at every turn, even though you may be right now in Paris "making the way straight." You have put your love of beauty, your restrained love for color, and your exceptional sense of balance into the whole establishment. It is a man's house—things are made for use; the chairs will stand weight; the couches are not fluff; one can lean with safety on the tables. But everywhere the eye is satisfied. My bed is beautiful, French I fancy, yet it is comfort itself. The lamp beside my bed is a dull bit of bronze which does not poke itself into your sleepy eye, yet you know that it fits the need, not only for light but for satisfaction to the eyes after the light comes. And the bathtub—may I speak of a bathtub in a bread-and-butter letter?—the bathtub is not too long—do you ever suffer from the long, long stretch into the cold water at your back and the imperfect support to the head which imperils your entire submergence?—your bathtub is not

too long, and I grab it on both sides to get out. And as I dry myself I look down into that garden of precise, trimmed and varied green upon which the rambler roses smile.

It is well to have had money. No Bolshevism comes out of such a place as this. It makes no challenge to the envy of the submerged tenth. It has not ostentation. It gives off no glare, and it is all used. For men who can put money to such use, who do not over-indulge their own love for things of beauty, nor build for luxurious living, but mould a bit of seashore, some trees and a rambling house into an expression of their own dignified and balanced natures, for such men I am quite sure there is, or will be, no social peril from the Red.

And may I close with a word, an inadequate and most feeble word, as to the Lady of the House who so perfectly complements the beauty and the refinement of her setting. She would make livable and lovable a shack, and she would draw to it those who think high thoughts. She has an aura of sympathy and companionability which makes her one with the healing earth and the warming, encompassing sunshine.

May you and she give many more sojourners as much of the right stimulus as you have given yours affectionately,

Franklin K. Lane

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING LETTERS

Jane Welsh Carlyle: Letters to Her Family, 1839-1863: edited by Leonard Huxley

Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley: edited by Leonard Huxley

The Letters of Henry James: edited by Percy Lubbock

The Letters of William James: edited by Henry James (his son)

The Letters of Franklin K. Lane: edited by Anne W. Lane and Louise H. Wall

Mrs. *Montague "Queen of the Blues":* edited by Reginald Blunt

The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page: edited by Burton J. Hendrick

Mark Twain's Letters: arranged with comment by Albert Bigelow Paine

Letters of Horace Walpole: edited by Charles Duke Yonge

Editor to Author: The Letters of Maxwell E. Perkins: edited by John Hall Wheelock

BIOGRAPHY

Letters, that is, published correspondence, and Biography, are so closely related that the two areas of writing merge into one, and the reader, once he makes a beginning, finds himself eagerly reading both letters and biographies. Some critics insist that biography should be classified as the "literature of knowledge," since the author's chief concern is to record the facts of a life; that his purpose is to provide the reader with information; that the biographer must be objective, his rôle being that of a photographer.

But this definition of the rôle of the biographer is vigorously assailed by those critics who claim that the true biographer resembles the portrait painter whose theory and philosophy determine his conception and his interpretation of his subject. Probably both schools of thought could cite famous biographies to support their respective views. Certainly, Franklin's *Autobiography* provides the reader with ample information, but compare it with Carl Van Doren's *Benjamin Franklin,* a work that goes beyond the bounds of information, virtually recreating Franklin. Van Doren's *Benjamin Franklin* is the product of scholarship, but the facts are wrought into a rich tapestry that could be the result only of intellect and imagination and emotion in active collaboration.

The reader will find, as he explores biography, that it has varied greatly in successive generations. Today, under the impact of psychology, the reader wants more than facts; he wants the interpretation of facts, the explanation of traits of character and motives; no fact is trivial in the eye of the biographer whose writings might be called "psychographs," to use a term coined by Gamaliel Bradford, his works being excellent examples of the psychological approach to biography.

But Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship* discloses the romantic,

heroic quality in each of his subjects. He accents the heroic in Robert Burns, for example. It is interesting to speculate how a psychograph of Burns by Gamaliel Bradford would read in contrast with Carlyle's essay on Burns.

Another school of biographers records only the virtues of their subjects, in contrast with those biographers who focus attention on the faults and foibles of the men and women about whom they write. Two biographies of Florence Nightingale, for example, represent opposite approaches.

The poet, the novelist, the story-writer, give their imagination a free rein but the biographer is fettered by facts. According to Virginia Woolf, there are biographers who "can give us the creative fact, the fertile fact, the fact that suggests and engenders." Their work deserves the classification of "literature of power."

Some readers think that they prefer only matter-of-fact reading material, refusing to submit to the magical spell of poetry and romance. For such readers, I recommend the reading of biography. As they note how environment impinges on the character and personality of men and women, and the response that the subjects of biography make to their total environment, an interaction of physical, social, spiritual forces, they easily make the transition to the reading of literature created by the free, unfettered imagination of great writers. Almost unwittingly the matter-of-fact reader will plunge sooner or later headlong into fiction, poetry, drama, involved irresistibly in the problems of human beings whether they exist in imagination or reality, for the characters in great fiction are true to the truth of human experience.

The plan of action for the reader of biography is clearly defined. He reads to find the answers to certain questions. He reflects: This man or woman is the product of the meeting of two forces, hereditary and environmental. What is the nature of this individual man or woman? How does he or she meet the successive crises that experience entails?

The following suggestions for exploring biographical writing present men and women in crises. What is the nature of the crisis? How does each meet it?

Bradford, Gamaliel: *Bare Souls*
Confederate Portraits
Canby, Henry Seidel: *Thoreau*
Chute, Marchette: *Shakespeare of London*
Coit, Margaret L.: *John C. Calhoun: American Portrait*
Freeman, Douglas Southall: *R. E. Lee, a Biography*
Garland, Hamlin: *A Son of the Middle Border*
Hudson, W. H.: *Far Away and Long Ago*
Matthiessen, F. O.: *Theodore Dreiser*
Pupin, Michael: *From Immigrant to Inventor*
Strachey Lytton: *Eminent Victorians*
Tharp, Louise Hall: *The Peabody Sisters of Salem*
Van Doren, Carl: *Benjamin Franklin*
Williams, Blanche Colton: *Clara Barton*
Woodham-Smith, Cecil: *Florence Nightingale*

CHAPTER X

★

HOW TO READ DRAMA; POETRY

Drama

This writing of plays is a great matter, forming as it does the minds and affections of men in such sort that whatsoever they see done in show on the stage, they will presently be doing in earnest in the world, which is but a large stage.

From *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*
by George Bernard Shaw

THE etymology of the word, *drama*, reveals its true significance: Greek, *dran*, to do, to act. A drama presents a situation that requires action; because of the conflict of antagonistic forces, the suspense, the mounting tension, the climax, the characters created in the round and faced with the necessity to act, and because of the thing or principle for which they struggle, drama makes a strong appeal to theatre-goers, who can be swept up and out of themselves and their familiar world by the combined artistry of the playwright, the actor, the producer, and the emotional reaction of the audience to what occurs in a miniature world on a stage.

But there is a place in one's reading program for plays, whether the reader sees them enacted or not. He can see them in his mind's eye. Most plays present a problem in human affairs involving men and women in crisis. The play may use one act or two, or three, or four, or five acts to provide the solution or outcome of the problem. Before any play begins, much has happened. The reader confronts

an entanglement, a knot; the events must move to a dénouement, the untying of the knot. Taking his clue from the distinguishing characteristics of the drama, he reads a play, on the alert to discover the dramatist's thesis, the kind of men and women involved in the attack and counter-attack to defend or deny the thesis, and the outcome of the struggle. He becomes involved in human complications and the charged emotional atmosphere created by dramatic art. The reader's imagination must serve him as the producer and the actor serve the theatre-goer. He must take advantage of every stage direction, printed in italics and supplied by the speeches of the characters. He must pin-point the action in time and place, acquaint himself with the who's who of the story, and note the time-sequence of the incidents. Do the events proceed forward or run in reverse, or does the author employ the flash-back device borrowed by the cinema? The reader's chief obligation is to discover as early as possible in the play what has precipitated the conflict? Who is the protagonist? Who is the antagonist? What is at stake? Who is likely to win? What is the solution?

It is unusual that a play achieves the list of best-sellers, and rarely maintains its place long in competition with the novel, the short-story, or even with the timely "book of knowledge." There are many explanations. In my attempts for many years to help men and women with their reading, I have found certain bars that seem to block the average reader's efforts to read plays; whether anything can be done to remove the bars to the collaboration of reader and dramatist is debatable. Readers do not like long passages of exposition and description, printed in italics and enclosed in parentheses. Habituated from the earliest stages of reading to expect first the speech, then the speaker's name, the reader finds it hard to reverse the procedure and accept the name of the speaker first. Most readers prefer the running narrative. Either instruction in reading must recognize these hurdles, or the author and publisher must make fewer demands on the reader's inability to adjust to reversals and to typographical challenges.

The critical reader approaches *Hamlet*, to understand the nature of this acute problem in human affairs and to find the solution offered by the supreme dramatic poet of the modern world, Shakespeare. The action of the play does not begin at the beginning; it

opens with affairs at a crisis. A murder has just been committed—the murder of a king. His ghost comes back, demanding justice. After the king's death, with unseemly haste the queen, the widow, defied convention and married her late husband's brother. Hamlet is away at college. He is called home. He has been deprived of his father, a throne, and, in a sense, of his mother. Now the reader asks: "What sort of man was Hamlet? What will that kind of man do under these circumstances?" The five-act tragedy provides Shakespeare's answer. Against a background of "five deaths on the stage, three appearances of a ghost, a dumb-show and a play within the play, a mad woman, a struggle in a grave at a funeral, a fencing match; stabbing, drowning, poison, pirates, an angry mob, soldiers marching, cannon firing,"* the reader shares vicariously in the tortured struggle of Hamlet trying to decide what he should do. In *Hamlet*, the greatness of Shakespeare's dramatic power and the magic of his poetry are evidence of his universal mind. There is apparently no limit to the number of times one can read *Hamlet* only to find new meaning and new beauty each time. It is ageless. Its scope is that of universal man in the throes of a spiritual struggle. T. S. Eliot called *Hamlet* the Mona Lisa of Shakespeare's plays. The reader is fortunate who recalls John Barrymore's conception and interpretation of *Hamlet*.

The play, *Justice*, by John Galsworthy, has for its theme the inescapable paradox that justice can be terribly unjust; that is, man-made law can do violence to human rights; when the "unco guid" are arrayed on the side of the law, the offender may despair of getting real justice. And when the offender is a helpless kind of individual, the conflict between justice and injustice may weight the scales on the side of man's inhumanity to man. The conflict becomes still more poignant, if the victim of the law is not a criminal at heart, but is doomed to become one through the agency of society's penal institutions. It is an unresolved conflict, and for this reason a tragedy to which one cannot be reconciled. In *Strife*, another of Galsworthy's social dramas, the workers contend bitterly through starvation and suffering with the officers of the company, finally accepting the same agreement that the workers had opposed in the beginning; nothing

* From *The Enjoyment of Literature*, by Elizabeth Drew. Copyright, 1935, by W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.

has been accomplished on either side. It is the dramatic struggle between labor and capital with no solution offered.

The second act of *Justice* follows. In the first act, William Falder, a clerk in a solicitor's office in London, in a moment of overwhelming sympathy and panic, commits forgery to rescue a woman, Ruth Honeywell, from her husband who has treated her and her children cruelly. Falder cannot resist her appeal for help; he changes *nine* to *ninety* pounds in a check, and plans to leave with her and the children for South America. The laws of England do not recognize cruelty as ground for divorce. The senior member of the firm, James How, decides to prosecute Falder, in spite of the protests of his son, Walter How. This difference between father and son accentuates the conflict of the two opposing forces.

In the trial scene, again the opposition is sharply pointed up. Falder's lawyer, Hector Frome, is a young advocate, who pleads that in a moment of aberration a man can slip into that great cage which never again quite lets a man go—the cage of the Law. Frome is on dangerous ground; he knows that he is, for he has a lawyer's respect for the law; yet (shifting his figure of speech) he pleads in the name of humanity that "the chariot-wheels of justice shall not roll over this boy." But Cleaver, the prosecuting attorney, appropriately named, marshals his legal scholarship, his amused contempt, and his corrosive irony against his young opponent's plea for mercy toward Falder. The outcome is inevitable. Justice triumphs!

Two years in the penitentiary, the impossibility of securing work on his release, the consciousness that all his sacrifice has been in vain when Ruth complies with his former employers' demand that she should part with Falder, and finally his arrest, because he has not observed the parole regulations, point to only one logical end. Falder commits suicide. The struggle, the anguish, the destruction of every human right—all has been in vain, Galsworthy says. The reader is overwhelmed by a sense of bewildered futility, if justice must be unjust.

The reader holds the theme in the foreground of consciousness as he reads. The play has an organic unity, for it has a theme that determines virtually everything that is said or done. The characters, by their gestures, by what they say, by the side they uphold, are men and

women in everyday life in London and by their familiarity insure the reader's understanding and sympathy.

The reader of the play sees the *locale* clearly; he comprehends the time of the action; he differentiates the characters and ranges them in two opposing camps; he feels the mounting suspense and tension created by the conflict; he is conscious of the controlling logic of the theme. As he reads, his imagination serves him as the stage director, the electrician, the producer, the actor, serve an audience witnessing the production of the play. John Barrymore in the rôle of Falder gave unforgettable proof of his power to portray the human soul in anguish; for three hours, Barrymore and Falder were one and the same.

In many respects, a dramatic poem, a short-story, a novel, a play have characteristics in common. All deal with human affairs in crisis. The reader is deeply concerned with what precipitates the crisis, with what is at stake, how the men and women behave in the critical situation, what is the outcome of the conflict. Does the reader emerge from the vicarious experience with firmer convictions, with clearer vision, with sensibilities more disciplined, yet sympathetic, with his imagination better able to help him to enter into the mind and heart of others? This is what great literature can do for us and what it should do.

JUSTICE*

by JOHN GALSWORTHY

ACT II

A Court of Justice, on a foggy October afternoon—crowded with barristers, solicitors, reporters, ushers, and jurymen. Sitting in the large, solid dock is FALDER, with a warder on either side of him, placed there for his safe custody, but seemingly indifferent to and unconscious of his presence. FALDER is sitting exactly opposite to the JUDGE, who, raised above the clamour of the court, also seems unconscious of and indifferent to everything. HAROLD CLEAVER, the counsel for the Crown, is a

* Reprinted from *Plays* by John Galsworthy; copyright, 1909, by John Galsworthy; 1936, by Ada Galsworthy; used by permission of the publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons.

dried, yellowish man, of more than middle age, in a wig worn almost to the colour of his face. HECTOR FROME, the counsel for the defence, is a young, tall man, clean-shaved, in a very white wig. Among the spectators, having already given their evidence, are JAMES and WALTER HOW, and COWLEY, the cashier. WISTER, the detective, is just leaving the witness-box.

CLEAVER. That is the case for the Crown, me lud!

Gathering his robes together, he sits down.

FROME. [*Rising and bowing to the* JUDGE] If it please your lordship and gentlemen of the jury. I am not going to dispute the fact that the prisoner altered this cheque, but I am going to put before you evidence as to the condition of his mind, and to submit that you would not be justified in finding that he was responsible for his actions at the time. I am going to show you, in fact, that he did this in a moment of aberration, amounting to temporary insanity, caused by the violent distress under which he was labouring. Gentlemen, the prisoner is only twenty-three years old. I shall call before you a woman from whom you will learn the events that led up to this act. You will hear from her own lips the tragic circumstances of her life, the still more tragic infatuation with which she has inspired the prisoner. This woman, gentlemen, has been leading a miserable existence with a husband who habitually ill-uses her, from whom she actually goes in terror of her life. I am not, of course, saying that it's either right or desirable for a young man to fall in love with a married woman, or that it's his business to rescue her from an ogre-like husband. I'm not saying anything of the sort. But we all know the power of the passion of love; and I would ask you to remember, gentlemen, in listening to her evidence, that, married to a drunken and violent husband, she has no power to get rid of him; for, as you know, another offence besides violence is necessary to enable a woman to obtain a divorce; and of this offence it does not appear that her husband is guilty.

JUDGE. Is this relevant, Mr. Frome?

FROME. My lord, I submit, extremely—I shall be able to show your lordship that directly.

JUDGE. Very well.

FROME. In these circumstances, what alternatives were left to her? She could either go on living with this drunkard, in terror

of her life; or she could apply to the Court for a separation order. Well, gentlemen, my experience of such cases assures me that this would have given her very insufficient protection from the violence of such a man; and even if effectual would very likely have reduced her either to the workhouse or the streets—for it's not easy, as she is now finding, for an unskilled woman without means of livelihood to support herself and her children without resorting either to the Poor Law or—to speak quite plainly—to the sale of her body.

JUDGE. You are ranging rather far, Mr. Frome.

FROME. I shall fire point-blank in a minute, my lord.

JUDGE. Let us hope so.

FROME. Now, gentlemen, mark—and this is what I have been leading up to—this woman will tell you, and the prisoner will confirm her, that, confronted with such alternatives, she set her whole hopes on himself, knowing the feeling with which she had inspired him. She saw a way out of her misery by going with him to a new country, where they would both be unknown, and might pass as husband and wife. This was a desperate and, as my friend Mr. Cleaver will no doubt call it, an immoral resolution; but, as a fact, the minds of both of them were constantly turned towards it. One wrong is no excuse for another, and those who are never likely to be faced by such a situation possibly have the right to hold up their hands—as to that I prefer to say nothing. But whatever view you take, gentlemen, of this part of the prisoner's story—whatever opinion you form of the right of these two young people under such circumstances to take the law into their own hands—the fact remains that this young woman in her distress, and this young man, little more than a boy, who was so devotedly attached to her, *did* conceive this—if you like—reprehensible design of going away together. Now, for that, of course, they required money, and—they had none. As to the actual events of the morning of July 7th, on which this cheque was altered, the events on which I rely to prove the defendant's irresponsibility—I shall allow those events to speak for themselves, through the lips of my witnesses. Robert Cokeson. [*He turns, looks round, takes up a sheet of paper, and waits.*]

COKESON *is summoned into court, and goes into the witness-box, holding his hat before him. The oath is administered to him.*

FROME. What is your name?

COKESON. Robert Cokeson.

FROME. Are you managing clerk to the firm of solicitors who employ the prisoner?

COKESON. Ye-es.

FROME. How long had the prisoner been in their employ?

COKESON. Two years. No, I'm wrong there—all but seventeen days.

FROME. Had you him under your eye all that time?

COKESON. Except Sundays and holidays.

FROME. Quite so. Let us hear, please, what you have to say about his general character during those two years.

COKESON. [*Confidentially to the jury, and as if a little surprised at being asked*] He was a nice, pleasant-spoken young man. I'd no fault to find with him—quite the contrary. It was a *great* surprise to me when he did a thing like that.

FROME. Did he ever give you reason to suspect his honesty?

COKESON. No! To have dishonesty in our office, that'd never do.

FROME. I'm sure the jury fully appreciate that, Mr. Cokeson.

COKESON. Every man of business knows that honesty's the sign qua non.

FROME. Do you give him a good character all round, or do you not?

COKESON. [*Turning to the* JUDGE] Certainly. We were all very jolly and pleasant together, until this happened. Quite upset me.

FROME. Now, coming to the morning of the 7th of July, the morning on which the cheque was altered. What have you to say about his demeanour that morning?

COKESON. [*To the jury*] If you ask me, I don't think he was quite compos when he did it.

THE JUDGE. [*Sharply*] Are you suggesting that he was insane?

COKESON. Not compos.

THE JUDGE. A little more precision, please.

FROME. [*Smoothly*] Just tell us, Mr. Cokeson.

COKESON. [*Somewhat outraged*] Well, in my opinion—[*looking at the* JUDGE]—such as it is—he was jumpy at the time. The jury will understand my meaning.

FROME. Will you tell us how you came to that conclusion?

COKESON. Ye-es. I will. I have my lunch in from the restaurant, a chop and a potato—saves time. That day it happened to come

just as Mr. Walter How handed me the cheque. Well, I like it hot; so I went into the clerks' office and I handed the cheque to Davis, the other clerk, and told him to get change. I noticed young Falder walking up and down. I said to him: "This is not the Zoological Gardens, Falder."

FROME. Do you remember what he answered?

COKESON. Ye-es: "I wish to God it were!" Struck me as funny.

FROME. Did you notice anything else peculiar?

COKESON. I did.

FROME. What was that?

COKESON. His collar was unbuttoned. Now, I like a young man to be neat. I said to him: "Your collar's unbuttoned."

FROME. And what did he answer?

COKESON. Stared at me. It wasn't nice.

THE JUDGE. Stared at you? Isn't that a very common practice?

COKESON. Ye-es, but it was the look in his eyes. I can't explain my meaning—it was funny.

FROME. Had you ever seen such a look in his eyes before?

COKESON. No. If I had I should have spoken to the partners. We can't have anything eccentric in our profession.

THE JUDGE. Did you speak to them on that occasion?

COKESON. [*Confidentially*] Well, I didn't like to trouble them about prime facey evidence.

FROME. But it made a very distinct impression on your mind?

COKESON. Ye-es. The clerk Davis could have told you the same.

FROME. Quite so. It's very unfortunate that we've not got him here. Now can you tell me of the morning on which the discovery of the forgery was made? That would be the 18th. Did anything happen that morning?

COKESON. [*With his hand to his ear*] I'm a little deaf.

FROME. Was there anything in the course of that morning—I mean before the discovery—that caught your attention?

COKESON. Ye-es—a woman.

THE JUDGE. How is *this* relevant, Mr. Frome?

FROME. I am trying to establish the state of mind in which the prisoner committed this act, my lord.

THE JUDGE. I quite appreciate that. But this was long after the act.

FROME. Yes, my lord, but it contributes to my contention.

THE JUDGE. Well!

FROME. You say a woman. Do you mean that she came to the office?

COKESON. Ye-es.

FROME. What for?

COKESON. Asked to see young Falder; he was out at the moment.

FROME. Did you see her?

COKESON. I did.

FROME. Did she come alone?

COKESON. [*Confidentially*] Well, there you put me in a difficulty. I mustn't tell you what the office-boy told me.

FROME. Quite so, Mr. Cokeson, quite so——

COKESON. [*Breaking in with an air of "You are young—leave it to me"*] But I think we can get round it. In answer to a question put to her by a third party the woman said to me: "They're mine, sir."

THE JUDGE. What are? What were?

COKESON. Her children. They were outside.

THE JUDGE. How do you know?

COKESON. Your lordship mustn't ask me that, or I shall have to tell you what I was told—and that'd never do.

THE JUDGE. [*Smiling*] The office-boy made a statement.

COKESON. Egg-zactly.

FROME. What I want to ask you, Mr. Cokeson, is this. In the course of her appeal to see Falder, did the woman say anything that you specially remember?

COKESON. [*Looking at him as if to encourage him to complete the sentence*] A leetle more, sir.

FROME. Or did she not?

COKESON. She did. I shouldn't like you to have led me to the answer.

FROME. [*With an irritated smile*] Will you tell the jury what it was?

COKESON. "It's a matter of life and death."

FOREMAN OF THE JURY. Do you mean the woman said that?

COKESON. [*Nodding*] It's not the sort of thing you like to have said to you.

FROME. [*A little impatiently*] Did Falder come in while she was there? [COKESON *nods*] And she saw him, and went away?

COKESON. Ah! there I can't follow you. I didn't see her go.

FROME. Well, is she there now?

COKESON. [*With an indulgent smile*] No!

FROME. Thank you, Mr. Cokeson. [*He sits down.*

CLEAVER. [*Rising*] You say that on the morning of the forgery the prisoner was jumpy. Well, now, sir, what precisely do you mean by that word?

COKESON. [*Indulgently*] I *want* you to understand. Have you ever seen a dog that's lost its master? He was kind of everywhere at once with his eyes.

CLEAVER. Thank you; I was coming to his eyes. You called them "funny." What are we to understand by that? Strange, or what?

COKESON. Ye-es, funny.

CLEAVER. [*Sharply*] Yes, sir, but what may be funny to you may not be funny to me, or to the jury. Did they look frightened, or shy, or fierce, or what?

COKESON. You make it very hard for me. I give you the word, and you want me to give you another.

CLEAVER. [*Rapping his desk*] Does "funny" mean mad?

COKESON. Not mad, fun——

CLEAVER. Very well! Now you say he had his collar unbuttoned? Was it a hot day?

COKESON. Ye-es; I think it was.

CLEAVER. And did he button it when you called his attention to it?

COKESON. Ye-es, I think he did.

CLEAVER. Would you say that that denoted insanity?

He sits down. COKESON, *who has opened his mouth to reply, is left gaping.*

FROME. [*Rising hastily*] Have you ever caught him in that dishevelled state before?

COKESON. No! He was *always* clean and quiet.

FROME. That will do, thank you.

COKESON *turns blandly to the* JUDGE, *as though to rebuke counsel for not remembering that the* JUDGE *might wish to have a chance; arriving at the conclusion that he is to be asked nothing further, he turns and descends from the box, and sits down next to* JAMES *and* WALTER.

FROME. Ruth Honeywill.

RUTH *comes into court, and takes her stand stoically in the witness-box. She is sworn.*

FROME. What is your name, please?

RUTH. Ruth Honeywill.

FROME. How old are you?

RUTH. Twenty-six.

FROME. You are a married woman, living with your husband? A little louder.

RUTH. No, sir; not since July.

FROME. Have you any children?

RUTH. Yes, sir, two.

FROME. Are they living with you?

RUTH. Yes, sir.

FROME. You know the prisoner?

RUTH. [*Looking at him*] Yes.

FROME. What was the nature of your relations with him?

RUTH. We were friends.

THE JUDGE. Friends?

RUTH. [*Simply*] Lovers, sir.

THE JUDGE. [*Sharply*] In what sense do you use that word?

RUTH. We love each other.

THE JUDGE. Yes, but——

RUTH. [*Shaking her head*] No, your lordship—not yet.

THE JUDGE. Not yet! H'm. [*He looks from* RUTH *to* FALDER] Well!

FROME. What is your husband?

RUTH. Traveller.

FROME. And what was the nature of your married life?

RUTH. [*Shaking her head*] It don't bear talking about.

FROME. Did he ill-treat you, or what?

RUTH. Ever since my first was born.

FROME. In what way?

RUTH. I'd rather not say. All sorts of ways.

THE JUDGE. I am afraid I must stop this, you know.

RUTH. [*Pointing to* FALDER] *He* offered to take me out of it, sir. We were going to South America.

FROME. [*Hastily*] Yes, quite—and what prevented you?

RUTH. I was outside his office when he was taken away. It nearly broke my heart.

Frome. You knew, then, that he had been arrested?

Ruth. Yes, sir. I called at his office afterwards, and [*pointing to* Cokeson] that gentleman told me all about it.

Frome. Now, do you remember the morning of Friday, July 7th?

Ruth. Yes.

Frome. Why?

Ruth. My husband nearly strangled me that morning.

The Judge. Nearly strangled you!

Ruth. [*Bowing her head*] Yes, my lord.

Frome. With his hands, or——?

Ruth. Yes, I just managed to get away from him. I went straight to my friend. It was eight o'clock.

The Judge. In the morning? Your husband was not under the influence of liquor then?

Ruth. It wasn't always that.

Frome. In what condition were you?

Ruth. In very bad condition, sir. My dress was torn, and I was half choking.

Frome. Did you tell your friend what had happened?

Ruth. Yes. I wish I never had.

Frome. It upset him?

Ruth. Dreadfully.

Frome. Did he ever speak to you about a cheque?

Ruth. Never.

Frome. Did he ever give you any money?

Ruth. Yes.

Frome. When was that?

Ruth. On Saturday.

Frome. The 8th?

Ruth. To buy an outfit for me and the children, and get all ready to start.

Frome. Did that surprise you, or not?

Ruth. What, sir?

Frome. That he had money to give you.

Ruth. Yes, because on the morning when my husband nearly killed me my friend cried because he hadn't the money to get me away. He told me afterwards he'd come into a windfall.

Frome. And when did you last see him?

RUTH. The day he was taken away, sir. It was the day we were to have started.

FROME. Oh, yes, the morning of the arrest. Well, did you see him at all between the Friday and that morning? [RUTH *nods*] What was his manner then?

RUTH. Dumb-like—sometimes he didn't seem able to say a word.

FROME. As if something unusual had happened to him?

RUTH. Yes.

FROME. Painful, or pleasant, or what?

RUTH. Like a fate hanging over him.

FROME. [*Hesitating*] Tell me, did you love the prisoner very much?

RUTH. [*Bowing her head*] Yes.

FROME. And had he a very great affection for you?

RUTH. [*Looking at* FALDER] Yes, sir.

FROME. Now, ma'am, do you or do you not think that your danger and unhappiness would seriously affect his balance, his control over his actions?

RUTH. Yes.

FROME. His reason, even?

RUTH. For a moment like, I think it would.

FROME. Was he very much upset that Friday morning, or was he fairly calm?

RUTH. Dreadfully upset. I could hardly bear to let him go from me.

FROME. Do you still love him?

RUTH. [*With her eyes on* FALDER] He's ruined himself for me.

FROME. Thank you.

He sits down. RUTH *remains stoically upright in the witness-box.*

CLEAVER. [*In a considerate voice*] When you left him on the morning of Friday the 7th you would not say that he was out of his mind, I suppose?

RUTH. No, sir.

CLEAVER. Thank you; I've no further questions to ask you.

RUTH. [*Bending a little forward to the jury*] I would have done the same for him; I would indeed.

THE JUDGE. Please, please! You say your married life is an unhappy one? Faults on both sides?

RUTH. Only that I never bowed down to him. I don't see why I should, sir, not to a man like that.

THE JUDGE. You refused to obey him?

RUTH. [*Avoiding the question*] I've always studied him to keep things nice.

THE JUDGE. Until you met the prisoner—was that it?

RUTH. No; even after that.

THE JUDGE. I ask, you know, because you seem to me to glory in this affection of yours for the prisoner.

RUTH. [*Hesitating*] I—I do. It's the only thing in my life now.

THE JUDGE. [*Staring at her hard*] Well, step down, please.

RUTH *looks at* FALDER, *then passes quietly down and takes her seat among the witnesses.*

FROME. I call the prisoner, my lord.

FALDER *leaves the dock; goes into the witness-box, and is duly sworn.*

FROME. What is your name?

FALDER. William Falder.

FROME. And age?

FALDER. Twenty-three.

FROME. You are not married?

FALDER *shakes his head.*

FROME. How long have you known the last witness?

FALDER. Six months.

FROME. Is her account of the relationship between you a correct one?

FALDER. Yes.

FROME. You became devotedly attached to her, however?

FALDER. Yes.

THE JUDGE. Though you knew she was a married woman?

FALDER. I couldn't help it, your lordship.

THE JUDGE. Couldn't help it?

FALDER. I didn't seem able to.

The JUDGE *slightly shrugs his shoulders.*

FROME. How did you come to know her?

FALDER. Through my married sister.

FROME. Did you know whether she was happy with her husband?

FALDER. It was trouble all the time.

FROME. You knew her husband?

FALDER. Only through her—he's a brute.

THE JUDGE. I can't allow indiscriminate abuse of a person not present.

FROME. [*Bowing*] If your lordship pleases. [*To* FALDER] You admit altering this cheque?

FALDER *bows his head.*

FROME. Carry your mind, please, to the morning of Friday, July the 7th, and tell the jury what happened.

FALDER [*Turning to the jury*] I was having my breakfast when she came. Her dress was all torn, and she was gasping and couldn't seem to get her breath at all; there were the marks of his fingers round her throat; her arm was bruised, and the blood had got into her eyes dreadfully. It frightened me, and then when she told me, I felt—I felt—well—it was too much for me! [*Hardening suddenly*] If you'd seen it, having the feelings for her that I had, you'd have felt the same, I know.

FROME. Yes?

FALDER. When she left me—because I had to go to the office—I was out of my senses for fear that he'd do it again, and thinking what I could do. I couldn't work—all the morning I was like that—simply couldn't fix my mind on anything. I couldn't think at all. I seemed to have to keep moving. When Davis—the other clerk—gave me the cheque—he said: "It'll do you good, Will, to have a run with this. You seem half off your chump this morning." Then when I had it in my hand—I don't know how it came, but it just flashed across me that if I put the *t y* and the nought there would be the money to get her away. It just came and went—I never thought of it again. Then Davis went out to his luncheon, and I don't really remember what I did till I'd pushed the cheque through to the cashier under the rail. I remember his saying "Gold or notes?" Then I suppose I knew what I'd done. Anyway, when I got outside I wanted to chuck myself under a 'bus; I wanted to throw the money away; but it seemed I was in for it, so I thought at any rate I'd save her. Of course the tickets I took for the passage and the little I gave her's been wasted, and all, except what I was obliged to spend myself, I've restored. I keep thinking over and over however it was I came to do it, and how I can't have it all again to do differently!

FALDER *is silent, twisting his hands before him.*

FROME. How far is it from your office to the bank?

FALDER. Not more than fifty yards, sir.

FROME. From the time Davis went out to lunch to the time you cashed the cheque, how long do you say it must have been?

FALDER. It couldn't have been four minutes, sir, because I ran all the way.

FROME. During those four minutes you say you remember nothing?

FALDER. No, sir; only that I ran.

FROME. Not even adding the *t y* and the nought?

FALDER. No, sir. I don't really.

FROME *sits down, and* CLEAVER *rises.*

CLEAVER. But you remember running, do you?

FALDER. I was all out of breath when I got to the bank.

CLEAVER. And you don't remember altering the cheque?

FALDER. [*Faintly*] No, sir.

CLEAVER. Divested of the romantic glamour which my friend is casting over the case, is this anything but an ordinary forgery? Come.

FALDER. I was half frantic all that morning, sir.

CLEAVER. Now, now! You don't deny that the *t y* and the nought were so like the rest of the handwriting as to thoroughly deceive the cashier?

FALDER. It was an accident.

CLEAVER. [*Cheerfully*] Queer sort of accident, wasn't it? On which day did you alter the counterfoil?

FALDER. [*Hanging his head*] On the Wednesday morning.

CLEAVER. Was that an accident too?

FALDER. [*Faintly*] No.

CLEAVER. To do that you had to watch your opportunity, I suppose?

FALDER. [*Almost inaudibly*] Yes.

CLEAVER. You don't suggest that you were suffering under great excitement when you did that?

FALDER. I was haunted.

CLEAVER. With the fear of being found out?

FALDER. [*Very low*] Yes.

THE JUDGE. Didn't it occur to you that the only thing for you to do was to confess to your employers, and restore the money?

FALDER. I was afraid. [*There is silence.*

CLEAVER. You desired, too, no doubt, to complete your design of taking this woman away?

FALDER. When I found I'd done a thing like that, to do it for nothing seemed so dreadful. I might just as well have chucked myself into the river.

CLEAVER. You knew that the clerk Davis was about to leave England—didn't it occur to you when you altered this cheque that suspicion would fall on him?

FALDER. It was all done in a moment. I thought of it afterwards.

CLEAVER. And that didn't lead you to avow what you'd done?

FALDER. [*Sullenly*] I meant to write when I got out there—I would have repaid the money.

THE JUDGE. But in the meantime your innocent fellow clerk might have been prosecuted.

FALDER. I knew he was a long way off, your lordship. I thought there'd be time. I didn't think they'd find it out so soon.

FROME. I might remind your lordship that as Mr. Walter How had the cheque-book in his pocket till after Davis had sailed, if the discovery had been made only one day later Falder himself would have left, and suspicion would have attached to him, and not to Davis, from the beginning.

THE JUDGE. The question is whether the prisoner knew that suspicion would light on himself, and not on Davis. [*To* FALDER *sharply*] Did you know that Mr. Walter How had the cheque-book till after Davis had sailed?

FALDER. I—I—thought—he——

THE JUDGE. Now speak the truth—yes or no!

FALDER. [*Very low*] No, my lord. I had no means of knowing.

THE JUDGE. That disposes of your point, Mr. Frome.

[FROME *bows to the* JUDGE.

CLEAVER. Has any aberration of this nature ever attacked you before?

FALDER. [*Faintly*] No, sir.

CLEAVER. You had recovered sufficiently to go back to your work that afternoon?

FALDER. Yes, I had to take the money back.

CLEAVER. You mean the *nine* pounds. Your wits were sufficiently keen for you to remember that? And you still persist in saying you don't remember altering this cheque. [*He sits down.*

FALDER. If I hadn't been mad I should never have had the courage.

FROME. [*Rising*] Did you have your lunch before going back?

FALDER. I never ate a thing all day; and at night I couldn't sleep.

FROME. Now, as to the four minutes that elapsed between Davis's going out and your cashing the cheque: do you say that you recollect *nothing* during those four minutes?

FALDER. [*After a moment*] I remember thinking of Mr. Cokeson's face.

FROME. Of Mr. Cokeson's face! Had that any connection with what you were doing?

FALDER. No, sir.

FROME. Was that in the office, before you ran out?

FALDER. Yes, and while I was running.

FROME. And that lasted till the cashier said: "Will you have gold or notes?"

FALDER. Yes, and then I seemed to come to myself—and it was too late.

FROME. Thank you. That closes the evidence for the defence, my lord.

The JUDGE *nods, and* FALDER *goes back to his seat in the dock.*

FROME. [*Gathering up notes*] If it please your lordship—Gentlemen of the Jury,—My friend in cross-examination has shown a disposition to sneer at the defence which has been set up in this case, and I am free to admit that nothing I can say will move you, if the evidence has not already convinced you that the prisoner committed this act in a moment when to all practical intents and purposes he was not responsible for his actions; a moment of such mental and moral vacuity, arising from the violent emotional agitation under which he had been suffering, as to amount to temporary madness. My friend has alluded to the "romantic glamour" with which I have sought to invest this case. Gentlemen, I have done nothing of the kind. I have merely shown you the background of "life"—that palpitating life which, believe me—whatever my friend may say—always lies behind the commission of a crime. Now gentlemen, we live in a highly civilized age, and the sight of brutal violence disturbs us in a very strange way, even when we have no personal interest in the

matter. But when we see it inflicted on a woman whom we love —what then? Just think of what your own feelings would have been, each of you, at the prisoner's age; and then look at him. Well! he is hardly the comfortable, shall we say bucolic, person likely to contemplate with equanimity marks of gross violence on a woman to whom he was devotedly attached. Yes, gentlemen, look at him! He has not a strong face; but neither has he a vicious face. He is just the sort of man who would easily become the prey of his emotions. You have heard the description of his eyes. My friend may laugh at the word "funny"—*I* think it better describes the peculiar uncanny look of those who are strained to breaking-point than any other word which could have been used. I don't pretend, mind you, that his mental irresponsibility was more than a flash of darkness, in which all sense of proportion became lost; but I do contend, that, just as a man who destroys himself at such a moment may be, and often is, absolved from the stigma attaching to the crime of self-murder, so he may, and frequently does, commit other crimes while in this irresponsible condition, and that he may as justly be acquitted of criminal intent and treated as a patient. I admit that this is a plea which might well be abused. It is a matter for discretion. But here you have a case in which there is every reason to give the benefit of the doubt. You heard me ask the prisoner what he thought of during those four fatal minutes. What was his answer? "I thought of Mr. Cokeson's face!" Gentlemen, no man could invent an answer like that; it is absolutely stamped with truth. You have seen the great affection (legitimate or not) existing between him and this woman, who came here to give evidence for him at the risk of her life. It is impossible for you to doubt his distress on the morning when he committed this act. We well know what terrible havoc such distress can make in weak and highly nervous people. It was all the work of a moment. The rest has followed, as death follows a stab to the heart, or water drops if you hold up a jug to empty it. Believe me, gentlemen, there is nothing more tragic in life than the utter impossibility of changing what you have done. Once this cheque was altered and presented, the work of four minutes—four mad minutes—the rest has been silence. But in those four minutes the boy before you has slipped through a door, hardly opened, into that great cage which never again quite lets a man go—the

cage of the Law. His further acts, his failure to confess, the alteration of the counterfoil, his preparations for flight, are all evidence—not of deliberate and guilty intention when he committed the prime act from which these subsequent acts arose; no—they are merely evidence of the weak character which is clearly enough his misfortune. But is a man to be lost because he is bred and born with a weak character? Gentlemen, men like the prisoner are destroyed daily under our law for want of that human insight which sees them as they are, patients, and not criminals. If the prisoner be found guilty, and treated as though he were a criminal type, he will, as all experience shows, in all probability become one. I beg you not to return a verdict that may thrust him back into prison and brand him for ever. Gentlemen, Justice is a machine that, when some one has once given it the starting push, rolls on of itself. Is this young man to be ground to pieces under this machine for an act which at the worst was one of weakness? Is he to become a member of the luckless crews that man those dark, ill-starred ships called prisons? Is that to be his voyage—from which so few return? Or is he to have another chance, to be still looked on as one who has gone a little astray, but who will come back? I urge you, gentlemen, do not ruin this young man! For, as a result of those four minutes, ruin, utter and irretrievable, stares him in the face. He can be saved now. Imprison him as a criminal, and I affirm to you that he will be lost. He has neither the face nor the manner of one who can survive that terrible ordeal. Weigh in the scales his criminality and the suffering he has undergone. The latter is ten times heavier already. He has lain in prison under this charge for more than two months. Is he likely ever to forget that? Imagine the anguish of his mind during that time. He has had his punishment, gentlemen, you may depend. The rolling of the chariot-wheels of Justice over this boy began when it was decided to prosecute him. We are now already at the second stage. If you permit it to go on to the third I would not give—that for him.

He holds up finger and thumb in the form of a circle, drops his hand, and sits down.

The jury stir, and consult each other's faces; then they turn towards the counsel for the Crown, who rises, and, fixing his eyes on a spot that seems to give him satis-

faction, slides them every now and then towards the jury.

CLEAVER. May it please your lordship—[*Rising on his toes*] Gentlemen of the Jury,—The facts in this case are not disputed, and the defence, if my friend will allow me to say so, is so thin that I don't propose to waste the time of the Court by taking you over the evidence. The plea is one of temporary insanity. Well, gentlemen, I daresay it is clearer to me than it is to you why this rather—what shall we call it?—bizarre defence has been set up. The alternative would have been to plead guilty. Now, gentlemen, if the prisoner had pleaded guilty my friend would have had to rely on a simple appeal to his lordship. Instead of that, he has gone into the byways and hedges and found this—er—peculiar plea, which has enabled him to show you the proverbial woman, to put her in the box—to give, in fact, a romantic glow to this affair. I compliment my friend; I think it highly ingenious of him. By these means, he has—to a certain extent—got round the Law. He has brought the whole story of motive and stress out in court, at first hand, in a way that he would not otherwise have been able to do. But when you have once grasped that fact, gentlemen, you have grasped everything. [*With good-humoured contempt*] For look at this plea of insanity; we can't put it lower than that. You have heard the woman. She has every reason to favour the prisoner, but what did she say? She said that the prisoner was *not* insane when she left him in the morning. If he were going out of his mind through distress, that was obviously the moment when insanity would have shown itself. You have heard the managing clerk, another witness for the defence. With some difficulty I elicited from him the admission that the prisoner, though jumpy (a word that he seemed to think you would understand, gentlemen, and I'm sure I hope you do), was *not* mad when the cheque was handed to Davis. I agree with my friend that it's unfortunate that we have not got Davis here, but the prisoner has told you the words with which Davis in turn handed him the cheque; he obviously, therefore, was *not* mad when he received it, or he would not have remembered those words. The cashier has told you that he was certainly in his senses when he cashed it. We have therefore the plea that a man who is sane at ten minutes past one, and sane at fifteen minutes past, may, for the purposes

of avoiding the consequences of a crime, call himself insane between those points of time. Really, gentlemen, this is so peculiar a proposition that I am not disposed to weary you with further argument. You will form your own opinion of its value. My friend has adopted this way of saying a great deal to you—and very eloquently—on the score of youth, temptation, and the like. I might point out, however, that the offence with which the prisoner is charged is one of the most serious known to our law; and there are certain features in this case, such as the suspicion which he allowed to rest on his innocent fellow-clerk, and his relations with this married woman, which will render it difficult for you to attach too much importance to such pleading. I ask you, in short, gentlemen, for that verdict of guilty which, in the circumstances, I regard you as, unfortunately, bound to record.

Letting his eyes travel from the JUDGE *and the jury to* FROME, *he sits down.*

THE JUDGE. [*Bending a little towards the jury, and speaking in a business-like voice*] Gentlemen, you have heard the evidence, and the comments on it. My only business is to make clear to you the issues you have to try. The facts are admitted, so far as the alteration of this cheque and counterfoil by the prisoner. The defence set up is that he was not in a responsible condition when he committed the crime. Well, you have heard the prisoner's story, and the evidence of the other witnesses—so far as it bears on the point of insanity. If you think that what you have heard establishes the fact that the prisoner was insane at the time of the forgery, you will find him guilty, but insane. If, on the other hand, you conclude from what you have seen and heard that the prisoner was sane—and nothing short of insanity will count—you will find him guilty. In reviewing the testimony as to his mental condition you must bear in mind very carefully the evidence as to his demeanour and conduct both before and after the act of forgery—the evidence of the prisoner himself, of the woman, of the witness—er—Cokeson, and—er—of the cashier. And in regard to that I especially direct your attention to the prisoner's admission that the idea of adding the *t y* and the nought did come into his mind at the moment when the cheque was handed to him; and also to the alteration of the counterfoil, and to his subsequent conduct generally. The bear-

ing of all this on the question of premeditation (and premeditation will imply sanity) is very obvious. You must not allow any considerations of age or temptation to weigh with you in the finding of your verdict. Before you can come to a verdict of guilty but insane you must be well and thoroughly convinced that the condition of his mind was such as would have qualified him at the moment for a lunatic asylum. [*He pauses; then, seeing the jury are doubtful whether to retire or no, adds:*] You may retire, gentlemen, if you wish to do so.

The jury retire by a door behind the JUDGE. *The* JUDGE *bends over his notes.* FALDER, *leaning from the dock, speaks excitedly to his solicitor, pointing down at* RUTH. *The solicitor in turn speaks to* FROME.

FROME. [*Rising*] My lord. The prisoner is very anxious that I should ask you if your lordship would kindly request the reporters not to disclose the name of the woman witness in the Press reports of these proceedings. Your lordship will understand that the consequences might be extremely serious to her.

THE JUDGE. [*Pointedly—with the suspicion of a smile*] Well, Mr. Frome, you deliberately took this course which involved bringing her here.

FROME. [*With an ironic bow*] If your lordship thinks I could have brought out the full facts in any other way?

THE JUDGE. H'm! Well.

FROME. There is very real danger to her, your lordship.

THE JUDGE. You see, I have to take your word for all that.

FROME. If your lordship would be so kind. I can assure your lordship that I am not exaggerating.

THE JUDGE. It goes very much against the grain with me that the name of a witness should ever be suppressed. [*With a glance at* FALDER, *who is gripping and clasping his hands before him, and then at* RUTH, *who is sitting perfectly rigid with her eyes fixed on* FALDER] I'll consider your application. It must depend. I have to remember that she may have come here to commit perjury on the prisoner's behalf.

FROME. Your lordship, I really——

THE JUDGE. Yes, yes—I don't suggest anything of the sort, Mr. Frome. Leave it at that for the moment.

As he finishes speaking, the jury return, and file back into the box.

CLERK OF ASSIZE. Gentlemen, are you agreed on your verdict?

FOREMAN. We are.

CLERK OF ASSIZE. Is it Guilty, or Guilty but insane?

FOREMAN. Guilty.

THE JUDGE nods; then, gathering up his notes, sits looking *at* FALDER, *who stands motionless.*

FROME. [*Rising*] If your lordship would allow me to address you in mitigation of sentence. I don't know if your lordship thinks I can add anything to what I have said to the jury on the score of the prisoner's youth, and the great stress under which he acted.

THE JUDGE. I don't think you can, Mr. Frome.

FROME. If your lordship says so—I do most earnestly beg your lordship to give the utmost weight to my plea. [*He sits down.*

THE JUDGE. [*To the* CLERK] Call upon him.

THE CLERK. Prisoner at the bar, you stand convicted of felony. Have you anything to say for yourself, why the Court should not give you judgment according to law?

[FALDER *shakes his head.*

THE JUDGE. William Falder, you have been given fair trial and found guilty, in my opinion rightly found guilty, of forgery. [*He pauses; then, consulting his notes, goes on*] The defence was set up that you were not responsible for your actions at the moment of committing this crime. There is no doubt, I think, that this was a device to bring out at first hand the nature of the temptation to which you succumbed. For throughout the trial your counsel was in reality making an appeal for mercy. The setting up of this defence of course enabled him to put in some evidence that might weigh in that direction. Whether he was well advised to do so is another matter. He claimed that you should be treated rather as a patient than as a criminal. And this plea of his, which in the end amounted to a passionate appeal, he based in effect on an indictment of the march of Justice, which he practically accused of confirming and completing the process of criminality. Now, in considering how far I should allow weight to his appeal, I have a number of factors to take into account. I have to consider on the one hand the grave nature of your offence, the deliberate way in which you subsequently altered the counterfoil, the danger you caused to an

innocent man—and that, to my mind, is a very grave point—and finally I have to consider the necessity of deterring others from following your example. On the other hand, I have to bear in mind that you are young, that you have hitherto borne a good character, that you were, if I am to believe your evidence and that of your witnesses, in a state of some emotional excitement when you committed this crime. I have every wish, consistently with my duty—not only to you, but to the community—to treat you with leniency. And this brings me to what are the determining factors in my mind in my consideration of your case. You are a clerk in a lawyer's office—that is a very serious element in this case; there can be no possible excuse made for you on the ground that you were not fully conversant with the nature of the crime you were committing, and the penalties that attach to it. It is said, however, that you were carried away by your emotions. The story has been told here to-day of your relations with this—er—Mrs. Honeywill; on that story both the defence and the plea for mercy were in effect based. Now what is that story? It is that you, a young man, and she, a young woman, unhappily married, had formed an attachment, which you both say—with what truth I am unable to gauge—had not yet resulted in immoral relations, but which you both admit was about to result in such relationship. Your counsel has made an attempt to palliate this, on the ground that the woman is in what he describes, I think, as "a hopeless position." As to that I can express no opinion. She is a married woman, and the fact is patent that you committed this crime with the view of furthering an immoral design. Now, however I might wish, I am not able to justify to my conscience a plea for mercy which has a basis inimical to morality. It is vitiated *ab initio*, and would, if successful, free you for the completion of this immoral project. Your counsel has made an attempt to trace your offence back to what he seems to suggest is a defect in the marriage law; he has made an attempt also to show that to punish you with further imprisonment would be unjust. I do not follow him in these flights. *The Law is what it is*—a majestic edifice, sheltering all of us, each stone of which rests on another. I am concerned only with its administration. The crime you have committed is a very serious one. I cannot feel it in accordance with my duty to Society to exercise the

powers I have in your favour. You will go to penal servitude for three years.

FALDER, *who throughout the* JUDGE'S *speech has looked at him steadily, lets his head fall forward on his breast.* RUTH *starts up from her seat as he is taken out by the warders. There is a bustle in court.*

THE JUDGE. [*Speaking to the reporters*] Gentlemen of the Press, I think that the name of the female witness should not be reported. *The reporters bow their acquiescence.*

THE JUDGE. [*To* RUTH, *who is staring in the direction in which* FALDER *has disappeared*] Do you understand, your name will not be mentioned?

COKESON. [*Pulling her sleeve*] The judge is speaking to you.

RUTH *turns, stares at the* JUDGE, *and turns away.*

THE JUDGE. I shall sit rather late to-day. Call the next case.

CLERK OF ASSIZE. [*To a warder*] Put up John Booley.

To cries of "Witnesses in the case of Booley":

The curtain falls.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING PLAYS

Anderson, Maxwell: *Mary of Scotland*
Chekhov, Anton: *The Cherry Orchard*
Ervine, St. John G.: *John Ferguson*
Galsworthy, John: *Strife*
Heyward, Dorothy and DuBose: *Porgy*
Ibsen, Henrik: *Hedda Gabler*
Ghosts
Maeterlinck, Maurice: *Pelléas and Mélisande*
Oates, Whitney J. and O'Neill, Eugene, Jr.: *The Complete Greek Drama*
O'Neill, Eugene: *The Emperor Jones*
Rostand, Edmond: *Cyrano de Bergerac*
Shakespeare, William: *Romeo and Juliet*
Macbeth
Antony and Cleopatra
Henry V

Shaw, George Bernard: *St. Joan*
Caesar and Cleopatra
Candida
Pygmalion

Sophocles: *Antigone*

POETRY

> The reader who is illuminated is, in a real sense, the poem.
>
> Henry M. Tomlinson

Most lay readers prefer prose to poetry. They instinctively accept the etymological meaning associated with *prose:* straight forward, straight ahead. They frequently claim that poets use round-about expressions instead of going straight ahead. They find poetry difficult to read, and are convinced that prose can say all that they want to hear or read and state it better, unmindful of the fact that good prose and poetry have much in common. Poetry is a natural, spontaneous mode of expression for young children. They often sing rhythmically what they want to communicate. The literature of primitive peoples takes the forms of tribal lays, chants, and lyric poems often of rare beauty and sensitivity; witness the poetry of the North American Indians, to go no further afield. It is rare that a poem or a book of poetry attains a place on the list of best-sellers.

One question often asked seriously is: What is the difference between poetry and prose? Certainly, they have much in common. Some of the best critics fall back on the answer that poetry is what one feels instinctively and intuitively to be poetry, but the answer does not satisfy the inquirer. On one occasion, John Erskine was asked the question. He answered it by telling what he did with his classes at Columbia University. He would assign the reading of Keats' *Eve of St. Agnes*, and at the next meeting of the class, he would ask the members to write the story of what happens in the poem. They would begin writing, in matter-of-fact fashion; after a few minutes, they would become embarrassed and restless; then they would look around the class furtively. At that point, the class was in

a receptive mood to discuss the difference between poetry and prose. Poetry creates a world of its own, as Keats' poem demonstrates, and can say what prose cannot.

Poetry deals with the most familiar things in life: grief, love of children, love of women, desire for bread and wine, birth and death and immortality, bravery in battle, loyalty of friends, the sunrise, night, whirlwind. There is nothing new in the subjects of poetry. The difference, the newness, is the way in which the poet says what he thinks and feels about the age-old things that are a part of everybody's life. To read poetry with appreciation, one must recognize the conventions of poetry, accept them, and rely on them to get to the heart of the poet's meaning. Because the poet deals with the old and familiar, he must express his thoughts and feelings in a way that will arrest the attention of the reader and make him see the familiar in a new light and with new and deeper meaning.

The reader's responsibility is to become acquainted with the conventions of poetry in order that he may collaborate with the poet; reading poetry should be a partnership of two people in thinking and feeling and imagining.

One of the characteristics of poetry is rhythm; good prose is rhythmic, too, but it lacks the accented flow and movement with regularly recurring sounds of vowels and consonants, which can capture the reader as surely as the marching of soldiers to drum beat arrests and stirs him. In Hilaire Belloc's *Tarantella,** the rhythmic beat of words is married to immortal music.

> Do you remember an Inn, Miranda?
> Do you remember an Inn?
> And the tedding** and the spreading
> Of the straw for a bedding,
> And the fleas that tease in the High Pyrenees,
> And the wine that tasted of the tar?
> And the cheers and the jeers of the young muleteers
> (Under the vine of the dark verandah?)
> Do you remember an Inn, Miranda,
> Do you remember an Inn?

* From *Sonnets and Verse* by Hilaire Belloc, published by Gerald Duckworth and Company.

** tedding: spreading to dry, as hay.

The lines move to the clapping of castanets; you hear and see the lively tarantella. Ask the same question of Miranda in ordinary prose and note its inexpressiveness.

Some readers find it difficult to cope with the inversions of poetry. See page 63, for illustrations from Milton and Whittier. Poetry makes forthright demands on the reader's ability to cope with the grammatical structure of a sentence. The following sonnet by Shakespeare is one sentence, compact in organization, the grammatical structure sturdily supporting the thought.

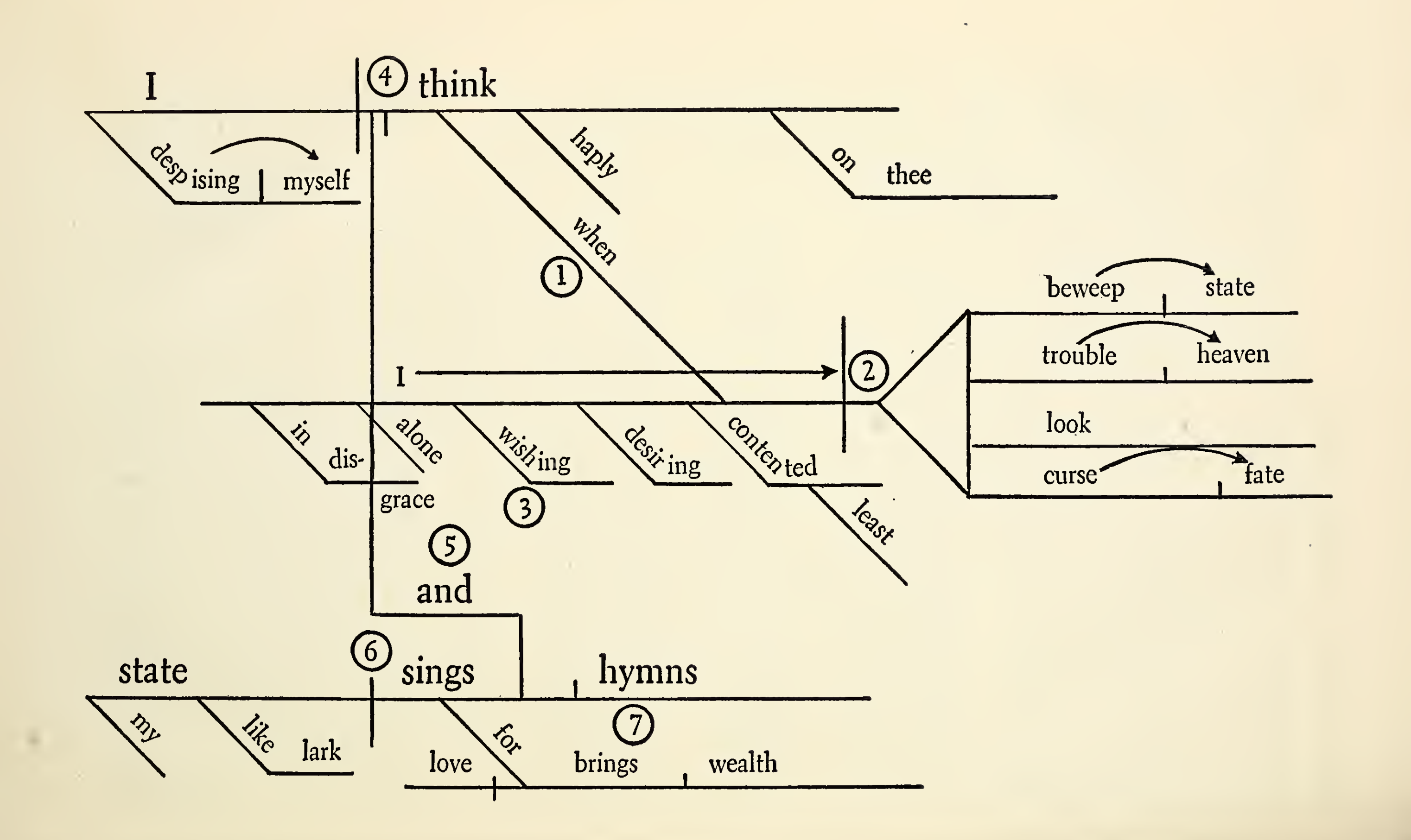
	rhyming scheme
When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,	a
I all alone beweep my outcast state	b
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries	a
And look upon myself and curse my fate,	b
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,	c
Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,	d
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,	c
With what I most enjoy contented least;	d
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising	e
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,	f
Like to the lark at break of day arising	e
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;	f
For they sweet love remember'd such wealth brings	g
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.	g

Shakespeare's sonnet begins with a time clause, introduced by *when;* the subject of the clause is modified by three participial phrases, *wishing, desiring, contented least.*

This long introductory clause is followed by one of the two main, independent clauses; *haply I think on thee.*

The remainder of the sonnet is the second independent clause: *my state sings hymns;* it contains a dependent clause expressing reason: *for*............................*kings,* the last two lines.

If we took a leaf from the builder's book, we might draw the steel skeleton of the sentence somewhat like this:



I
4
think
despising
myself
haply
on
thee
when
1
beweep
state
trouble
heaven
look
curse
fate
I
2
in
dis-
grace
alone
wishing
desiring
contented
least
3
5
and
state
6
sings
hymns
my
like
lark
for
7
love
brings
wealth

There are set patterns in poetry. The sonnet of Shakespeare's just quoted consists of four quatrains, with an ending couplet, always fourteen lines long. It has a definite rhyming scheme: ab ab cd cd ef ef gg.

In addition to making his thought fit a conventional form of fourteen lines with a prescribed rhyming scheme, the author of the Shakespearean sonnet must make each line conform to the demands of iambic pentameter, five metrical feet in measures of two syllables each, with the accent on the second syllable of the foot:

> With what | I most | enjoy | content | ed least
> Desir | ing this | man's art | and that | man's scope

Sonnets are easily memorized and remembered by the reader, because the pattern makes considerable demand on the author; it requires economy of expression and compliance with a fixed form—the right word in the right place.

The following sonnet* by Thomas S. Jones, Jr., is an example of the Italian sonnet, sometimes called the Petrarchan sonnet, from Petrarch, the great Italian poet. It will help the reader to know that the fourteen lines are broken into two stanzas, one of eight lines called the octave, and the other of six lines called the sestet. The rhyme scheme is different from that of the Shakespearean sonnet. In this type of sonnet, the meaning of the octave and the sestet can be expressed each in one sentence. When the reader puts the two related sentences together, he has condensed the fourteen lines to one sentence and expressed the essential meaning: The laws of Moses and the Prophets are lost in Love, as all colors lie folded in light. The finest poems make exacting demands on the reader, especially the poems of interpretative power, the poems that attempt to explain human beings in a framework of the universe. In *The Study of Poetry*, Matthew Arnold wrote: "The great power of poetry is . . . the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them."

* From *Shadow of the Perfect Rose*: Collected Poems of Thomas S. Jones, Jr., edited with a Memoir and Notes by John L. Foley. Farrar & Rinehart, New York, 1937.

THE SPIRIT AND THE LAW
by Thomas S. Jones, Jr.

Upon lone mountain-sides they stood apart:
One on immortal stone did roughly trace
Laws that still shape the conscience of a race
As the bright North Star shapes a seaman's chart;
Then came another, He whose tender art
Moved multitudes to seek through time and space
The brooding Love that craves a dwelling-place
Within the mystery of the human heart.

The grass that blows along the country ways,
The little leaves between the earth and sky,
The deepened lustres of an April dove
Own light the only law of their brief days;
And as in light all colours folded lie,
The Prophets and the Law are lost in Love.

The highly condensed mode of expression characteristic of much poetry challenges the reader's ability to supply the missing words. A good example of how essential an omitted word may be is illustrated by the selection from Clough on page 64. To omit the conjunction, *that*, is to read the opposite of what the poet says, and to demonstrate the value of grammar to the reader of poetry.

No consideration of how to read poetry with appreciation should overlook the poet's diction. The magic of poetry resides in the word. "The reader, because of the right word, can come into the immediate presence of what is in focus, whatever it may be, a mood, or an idea, or a scene, or a person," wrote John Middleton Murry. The poet does not express himself in generalizations, but in the word that evokes an image or a sensory experience. The purpose of figurative language is to create new associations with what is familiar. Such diction stimulates the imagination, the image-making faculty of the mind. The rhythmic juxtaposition of words inevitably right cannot fail to create mood, the crystallization of an emotion, a characteristic of poetry. Bliss Carman, stirred by the yellow, the purple, and the crimson of autumn, writes:

And my lonely spirit thrills
To see the frosty asters like a smoke upon the hills.

Gilbert K. Chesterton* caught the mood of triumph that climaxes the sea battle of Lepanto in 1571:

Don John pounding from the slaughter-painted poop,
Purpling all the ocean like a bloody pirate's sloop,
Scarlet running over on the silvers and the golds,
Breaking of the hatches up and bursting of the holds,
Thronging of the thousands up that labor under sea,
White for bliss and blind for sun and stunned for liberty!
Vivat Hispania!
Domino Gloria!
Don John of Austria
Has set his people free!

The lines from *The Man He Killed* sound casual, but it is easy to detect that Hardy hated war:

Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat, if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown.

It is a mood of irresistible longing that overwhelms Richard Hovey** when the "schooner's in the offing, with her topsails shot with fire."

I am fevered with the sunset
I am fretful with the bay,
For the wander-thirst is on me
And my soul is in Cathay.

But a composition might have rhythm and appropriate words, and appeal to the reader's imagination and emotion, yet would fall short of being genuinely poetical unless the theme were one that could give the reader the sense of being lifted up, for the moment at least, above the casual and commonplace. Poetry is a combination of many elements and makes a complex appeal to the reader though he may not be able to analyze it.

* *Lepanto* by Gilbert Keith Chesterton, published by Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd.
** *The Sea Gypsy.*

Many of the characteristics of great poetry are embodied in the selection from the *Book of Job*, a philosophical discussion in the form of a poetic drama. The selection marks the climax when the voice of the supernatural speaks out of the whirlwind.

The theme is one of universal interest: the mystery of suffering; the presence of pain and evil, the tragedy of life, how can they be accounted for? How can they be reconciled with the existence of God who is good?

The *locale* of the story is probably the land of Uz, in the midst of patriarchal life. Job's wealth came from pastoral and agricultural occupations; possibly, too, he was a merchant, for he had camels. The background is a combination of city and country life. The characters in the drama know the larger world, but they prefer to live in comfortable serenity. All the characters are Job's contemporaries except one youth who breaks into the councils of his elders. All speak the language of poetry; all are close to nature; they are accustomed to the beauty of nature and to its violence: thunderbolts, winds, whirlwinds, earthquakes, monsters of sea and land, the eclipse of the sun. The *dramatis personae* are worshippers of the God of the Hebrews, the invisible God, of whose nearness they are conscious.

According to the prologue, the action began in the Court of Heaven, in a council of the holy ones, the Sons of God who have charge of various provinces of the universe. One of the council was Satan, the Adversary, whose office was the inspection of the earth, "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it."

The Lord refers to Job as the perfect servant on earth; the Adversary is skeptical; Job has never been subjected to any tests. Then came that famous agreement: Job was to be smitten and afflicted, but he must not die. Would he still be the perfect servant? The proposal inspired Goethe with the conception in the Prologue of *Faust*.

Job's friends came to comfort him; their consolation takes the form of a philosophical discussion of the meaning of suffering. The last speaker is Elihu, a foreigner. As he talks, a whirlwind rises gradually: clouds, lightning, muttering of thunder, then a tempest of all the winds of heaven, then appalling darkness; finally an intolerable brightness. The roar of the whirlwind becomes a Voice.

The passage that follows is a selection from the speech of the

Voice. It is not an outburst of angry rebuke of Job. The Divine speaker defends Job, who has remained the faithful servant in spite of his afflictions. This is not the God of Judgment speaking. He is the God of Infinite Sympathy, revelling in his creation. He is the earth-builder. The sons of God sang together when the corner-stone of the earth was laid. God is fathomless energy, in the act of creation. The selection enumerates in detail what was created, as if an artist rejoiced in his creation. The mystery of suffering cannot be solved, said the great anonymous Hebrew poet. The universe is shrouded in mystery—Evil and Good alike. The passage has a background that staggers the imagination.

DIVINE INTERVENTION*

VOICE OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND

XLVI

Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?
Gird up now thy loins like a man;
For I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
—— Declare, if thou hast understanding ——
Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest?
Or who stretched the line upon it?
Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened?
Or who laid the corner stone thereof;
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?
Or who shut up the sea with doors,
When it brake forth, and issued out of the womb;
When I made the cloud the garment thereof,
And thick darkness a swaddling band for it,
And prescribed for it my decree,
And set bars and doors,
And said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further;
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed?"
Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days began,

* From *The Modern Reader's Bible,* edited by Richard G. Moulton. Copyright, 1895, 1907, by The Macmillan Company.

And caused the dayspring to know its place;
    That it might take hold of the ends of the earth,
    And the wicked be shaken out of it?
    It is changed as clay under the seal;
    And all things stand forth as a garment:
    And from the wicked their light is withholden,
    And the high arm is broken.
Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?
Or hast thou walked in the recesses of the deep?
Have the gates of death been revealed unto thee?
Or hast thou seen the gates of the shadow of death?
Hast thou comprehended the breadth of the earth?
    —— Declare, if thou knowest it all ——
Where is the way to the dwelling of light,
And as for darkness, where is the place thereof;
That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof,
And that thou shouldest discern the paths to the house thereof?
    —— Doubtless, thou knowest, for thou wast then born,
        And the number of thy days is great! ——
Hast thou entered the treasuries of the snow,
Or hast thou seen the treasuries of the hail,
    Which I have reserved against the time of trouble,
    Against the day of battle and war?
By what way is the light parted,
Or the east wind scattered upon the earth?
Who hath cleft a channel for the waterflood,
Or a way for the lightning of the thunder;
    To cause it to rain on a land where no man is;
    On the wilderness, wherein there is no man;
    To satisfy the waste and desolate ground;
    And to cause the tender grass to spring forth?
Hath the rain a father?
Or who hath begotten the drops of dew?
Out of whose womb came the ice?
And the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?
    The waters are hidden as with stone,
    And the face of the deep is frozen.
Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades,
Or loose the bands of Orion?
Canst thou lead forth the signs of the Zodiac in their season?

Or canst thou guide the Bear with her train?
Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens?
Canst thou establish the dominion thereof in the earth?
Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds,
That abundance of waters may cover thee?
Canst thou send forth lightnings, that they may go,
And say unto thee, Here we are?
Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts?
Or who hath given understanding to the mind?
Who can number the clouds by wisdom?
Or who can pour out the bottles of heaven,
    When the dust runneth into a mass,
    And the clods cleave fast together?
Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lioness?
Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,
    When they couch in their dens,
    And abide in the covert to lie in wait?
Who provideth for the raven his food,
    When his young ones cry unto God,
    And wander for lack of meat?
Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth?
Or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?
Canst thou number the months that they fulfil?
Or knowest thou the time when they bring forth?
    They bow themselves, they bring forth their young,
    They cast out their sorrows.
    Their young ones are in good liking,
    They grow up in the open field;
    They go forth, and return not again.
Who hath sent out the wild ass free?
Or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass?
    Whose house I have made the wilderness,
    And the salt land his dwelling place;
    He scorneth the tumult of the city,
    Neither heareth he the shoutings of the driver.
    The range of the mountains is his pasture,
    And he searcheth after every green thing.
Will the wild-ox be content to serve thee?
Or will he abide by thy crib?
Canst thou bind the wild-ox with his band in the furrow?

Or will he harrow the valleys after thee?
Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great?
Or wilt thou leave to him thy labour?
Wilt thou confide in him, that he will bring home thy seed,
And gather the corn of thy threshing-floor?
The wing of the ostrich rejoiceth;
But are her pinions and feathers kindly?
For she leaveth her eggs on the earth,
And warmeth them in the dust,
And forgetteth that the foot may crush them,
Or that the wild beast may trample them.
She is hardened against her young ones, as if they were not hers:
Though her labour be in vain, she is without fear;
Because God hath deprived her of wisdom,
Neither hath he imparted to her understanding.
What time she lifteth up herself on high,
She scorneth the horse and his rider.
Hast thou given the horse his might?
Hast thou clothed his neck with the quivering mane?
Hast thou made him to leap as a locust?
The glory of his snorting is terrible.
He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength:
He goeth out to meet the armed men.
He mocketh at fear and is not dismayed;
Neither turneth he back from the sword.
The quiver rattleth against him,
The flashing spear and the javelin.
He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage;
Neither standeth he still at the voice of the trumpet.
As oft as the trumpet soundeth he saith, Aha!
And he smelleth the battle afar off,
The thunder of the captains, and the shouting.
Doth the hawk soar by thy wisdom,
And stretch her wings toward the south?
Doth the eagle mount up at thy command,
And make her nest on high?
She dwelleth on the rock, and hath her lodging there,
Upon the crag of the rock and the strong hold.
From thence she spieth out the prey;
Her eyes behold it afar off.

Her young ones also suck up blood:
And where the slain are, there is she.

Shall he that cavilleth contend with the Almighty?
He that argueth with God, let him answer it.

[*A lull in the storm.*

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING POETRY

Eastman, Max: *Enjoyment of Poetry* with *Anthology for Enjoyment of Poetry*
Matthiessen, F. O.: *Oxford Book of American Verse*
Millet, Fred B.: *Reading Poetry*
Quiller-Couch, Sir Arthur: *The Oxford Book of English Verse*
Van Doren, Mark: *Introduction to Poetry*

Poetry is seldom read with the attention it requires. It requires a concentrated mind, a generous imagination, and a listening ear. . . . He [the poet] also has a concentrated mind, a generous imagination, and a listening ear. A poem exists only when its writer and its reader meet inside of it and conspire to ignore everything save what it says.

Introduction to Poetry
by Mark Van Doren

CHAPTER XI

★

RATE OF READING

> The art of reading is among other things the art of adopting the pace the author has set. Some books are fast and some are slow, but no book can be understood if it is taken at the wrong speed.
>
> *Liberal Education*
> by Mark Van Doren

THE term *rate* of reading is more accurate than *speed* of reading which implies to the unthinking that everything should be read rapidly. For a generation seriously contemplating traveling at a speed greater than that of sound, and taught that speed and efficiency are practically synonymous, it is advisable to clarify the relation of rate of reading to critical reading as defined in Chapter I.

Certainly not everything should be read rapidly; *better* does not always mean *faster* in relation to reading. The race is not always to the swift. The reader's speed or rate must be governed by his ability to comprehend accurately and appreciate fully what he reads. Time is necessary for thinking; that is, grasping the relationship of ideas, and time is essential for the imagination and emotions to make the appropriate response to what is read. There is no virtue in rapid reading or in slow, laborious reading, *per se*; two factors determine rate of reading; the reader and the material to be read, both very variable.

Most adult lay readers are slow readers. They were initiated in reading in the elementary grades when instruction emphasized oral reading heavily. Silent reading involves the coordination of mind

and eye, while oral reading introduces a third factor to be coordinated, the activity of the speech organs. The mind functions most efficiently when it is least distracted by bodily movement of any kind. Many adults will recall that when they were children they were discouraged from rapid reading and admonished that they could not understand what they read if they read rapidly. The ideal held up was slow, careful reading of everything; else the reader not only could not comprehend fully but he could not remember what he read. Adult students of reading sometimes attempt to defend their slow reading, insisting that they comprehend fully and remember accurately what they read. But they really find little consolation in the defence; when interviewed as to their purpose in taking a course in reading, they almost invariably say that they want to learn to read faster.

The testimony of Mr. Edward Weeks* in regard to his rate of reading is encouraging to all who wonder whether the tempo of an adult's reading can be accelerated:

> As I look back across the vista of twenty-five years, back to my early and oh, so peaceful days on the *Atlantic*, these are the things that stand out in the primer of my experience. As the First Reader, I had to read up to my capacity of unsolicited manuscripts every day, and I had to stretch that capacity month by month. As a student and in the Army I had been a very slow, meticulous reader, seldom doing better than forty pages an hour; now I found that by narrowing my gaze and reading down the center of the page, I could get the sense and, where style was involved, even the flavor of the prose. At the end of six months I had increased my rate of reading to the point where I was consuming sixty-five envelopes of manuscripts a week.

In discussing speed or rate of reading, we should keep in mind the two large categories of reading materials as defined by De Quincey: the literature that appeals chiefly to the intellect, and the literature that appeals, in addition, to the emotions and the imagination.

If the writer's appeal is chiefly to the mind as a thinking instrument, then the more rapidly the mind comprehends what is read, the better the comprehension, a fact established by educational research. This observation on reading rate applies to approximately seventy-

* Edward Weeks in the Peripatetic Reviewer—*The Atlantic*, June, 1950.

five per cent of what most adults read: the daily newspaper, magazine articles, popular treatises on science, politics, some technical materials, and current best-sellers. But the experienced, discriminating reader knows that difficult unfamiliar material cannot be read rapidly with full comprehension. There are times when the reader is fortunate if he can grasp the meaning even when he reads and re-reads with deliberation and reflection, unmindful of any consideration of speed and pausing to make summaries.

The competent reader of informational material grasps large totalities of meaning; he fuses details into a unit; he gets an over-view of the material, sensing the main idea and the relation of parts to the whole. On the other hand, if he plods slowly, word by word, he may lose sight of the essential meaning, for then his mind concentrates on symbols, not on the meaning of the symbols. He may fail to connect the end of a sentence with the beginning; he may be bewildered by unrelated details. He may read simply words, words, words.

There is a high correlation between speed of reading factual, informational material and intelligence. The expert reader with a high intelligence quotient tends to read factual material rapidly, unless it is unusually difficult. He is able to sense the structure or design of the material. He can pick up clues that guide him to the goal of the writer. Recognition of the structure of a passage facilitates reading at the proper rate, for the pattern is a guide to the movement of the thought, saving the reader from fumbling and making false starts.

Even experienced readers may be forced to slow down their rate of reading, if they encounter vocabulary difficulties. They may be blocked completely by technical terms; sometimes words in the general vocabulary may serve as effective interference to a reasonable rate of reading.

If the reader is familiar with the field in which he reads, he tends to read rapidly; he can skim intelligently. He may read the beginning and end of paragraphs, striding along in his seven-league boots. He is under no compulsion to maintain the same rate throughout the reading of an article; he follows the dictates of good comprehension. He may, according to some reviewers, "leaf" through a book, going as rapidly as he can turn the pages slowly, his experienced eye

lighting with uncanny accuracy on the sentences of each page that carry the burden of the thought. There are stories, apocryphal probably, of readers who can eat a substantial lunch, carry on a conversation, and leaf through a book with understanding, all at the same time. Macaulay was a phenomenal reader. He read so swiftly, according to his biographer, that he seemed to turn the pages almost without pausing, taking in at one glance all that was in them, and yet carrying away all that was worth remembering. The rapid reader re-creates the author's thought with the smallest number of contextual clues; he anticipates what the author will say. The more a reader knows, the greater his variety of interests, the more extensive his vocabulary, the more disciplined his mind, the better will he be able to adjust the appropriate rate of reading to the demands of the literature of knowledge.

The following observations by Huey,* the psychologist, may clarify the subject of rapidity of reading:

> Doubtless many of us dawdle along in our reading at a plodding pace which was set and hardened in days of listless poring over uninteresting tasks, or in imitation of the slow reading aloud which was usually going on either with ourselves or with others in the school.

> The superiority of the rapid reader is shown by the fact that his memory of the substance of his reading is more exact than that of the slow reader.

> Reading as an exercise for speaking has been heavily emphasized at the expense of reading as the act of thought-getting and thought-manipulating.

> By silently reading meanings from the first day of reading, and by practice in getting meanings from the page at the naturally rapid rate at which meanings come from situations in actual life, the rate of reading and of thinking will grow with the pupil's growth and with his power to assimilate what is read.

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* *Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, by E. B. Huey. Copyright, The Macmillan Co., 1908.

Continued practice in the prompt extraction of what the page has for the reader, irrespective of how it would sound if read to others, must result in increasing considerably the average effective rate of reading. And such a practice will also develop discriminative reading, and will develop the power to discriminate and to grasp the essential. Pages that are full of meaning, or that carry meanings for which the reader's apperception is not well prepared, will be given the time that they require. But many a page has almost nothing that the reader wants, or suggests only what he is already familiar with. There is simply no sense in reading such matter carefully at the regulation pace. The reader cannot afford it. Such reading costs the reader his time, and one who has been practiced in feeling values in reading will fly over such pages, delaying only at the occasional oases that appear in the desert of words. In such cases almost everything is in favor of the rapid reader. Not only does he save valuable time, but having a larger amount of what is being read ringing simultaneously and unitarily in the inner speech, he holds in his grasp at every moment a larger total of meaning, and sees each part in a better perspective. The disjointedness of print tends of itself to give an unnatural hobble to reading, and the one who grasps in larger units feels best the meaning totalities which are given quickly in actual speech, but which may need a long paragraph in print. The contracted speech range of the slow reader simply loses at each moment both ends of the total that is needed for an easy and correct grasp of meanings. It is sometimes necessary to read a difficult passage slowly at first, feeling the full values of each word or of important words. But even in such a case the correct meaning is better appreciated when such discussion is followed by a continuous reading at a rather rapid rate. Of course there are careless rapid readers as there are plodding slow ones. But if the practice has been in getting meanings rapidly, and not in covering a maximum number of pages, the rapid rate will not be found to stand in the way of thoroughness. It must be remembered, too, that each reader should be developed only to his own maximum rate of effective reading, and that these maximum rates will have as great individual differences as have the rates of thinking generally for these individuals.



Text-book material, philosophy, or any material that taxes the

reader's powers of comprehension should be read slowly, pencil in hand. It is fortunate if the reader owns the book and can mark passages that summarize the gist of the meaning, that indicate the structure or pattern of the composition, that express in trenchant phrases the thought-movement. Alertness for such passages aids the reader's concentration. Not one reading, but several may be necessary before the reader can share the thought of the writer. Students have found it profitable to re-read difficult material after an interval of time. But reading is not enough; reflection and discussion may be needed to insure comprehension. Various approaches to difficult material may be employed: visual, aural, oral, kinesthetic, intellectual, emotional, imaginative, to enable the reader to re-create the author's concepts in the pattern of the original. In reading profound material, rate of reading should have little consideration, particularly in the initial efforts to comprehend meaning.

The late R. L. Lyman, a pioneer in the field of reading on the secondary school level, stated the principles underlying rate of reading:*

> There is a very unmistakable relation between reasonable economy and reasonable thoroughness in reading. Under ordinary conditions, the reader who covers his assignments with moderate speed is more likely to comprehend well what he reads than is the skimmer who merely glances over the pages or the plodder who toils through the selection word by word, sentence by sentence. Reasonable economy of time is almost always accompanied by reasonable thoroughness in comprehension.
>
> The reason for this fact is not far to seek. Reading is the process of grasping ideas found upon the printed page. These ideas are not words, sentences, and paragraphs; the printed page is composed of mere symbols which embody the ideas. Moreover, the ideas themselves are not a lot of separate and isolated units, like so many pebbles on the seashore; they are rather like a string of stones set in a necklace; they are bound together by a thread of thought. The relationships between ideas, their order and sequence, their individual contributions to the main stream of thought, are almost as important to the reader as are the individual ideas themselves.

* From *The Mind At Work* by R. L. Lyman. Copyright, 1924, by Scott, Foresman and Company.

> Upon this basis rests the explanation of why reasonable rapidity in reading and reasonable thoroughness go hand in hand. The plodder or the dawdler "cannot see the forest for the trees"; while the habitual skimmer sees only the dim outlines of the forest. The symbols occupy the plodder's time. Each single idea requires too much energy. He loses perspective. The skimmer retains nothing but perspective. But on the other hand, the reader who has developed habits of economy in his rate of reading is far more likely to grasp the relationships of ideas.

While the imagination is always involved in reading *belles lettres*, it often happens that comprehension of technical material is impossible unless the constructive imagination is active. Obviously, time is essential to enlist the intellect and awaken the imagination when the reader attempts to cope with difficult, unfamiliar material; he must disregard rapid rate of reading.

The condition of one's eyes is a practical consideration deserving the attention of all readers, but especially of adults. It is difficult to concentrate if there is visual discomfort. Modern civilization subjects eyes to such undue strain that frequent visits to an eye-specialist are urgently recommended. It is obvious that no consideration of reading rate is complete without reference to visual efficiency and particularly eye-movement habits.

> Eye-movement habits are very important in reading. They are means which facilitate or hinder effective comprehension. Good readers have wide recognition-spans and make, on the average, fewer regressions than poor readers. In oral reading the fixations and refixations are usually more numerous, and their duration is greater than in silent reading. The eye-voice span is important in oral reading. Good oral readers have wide spans, which give them a better grasp of the meaning and enable them to arouse interest more effectively in their hearers. Individuals differ tremendously in their habit of eye-movement.*

The adult reader needs the care of an eye-specialist who is concerned not only with refraction but also with fusion. If there is a muscle imbalance, if the accommodation of convergent and divergent

* *The Applied Psychology of Reading* by Fowler D. Brooks. D. Appleton-Century Company. 1926.

muscles is poor, the reader should secure all the visual comfort and relief possible. There is little agreement on the relation of the vision to reading, but it is not debatable that everyone should be visually as comfortable as possible. Adult readers should err on the side of too many rather than too few visits to an eye-specialist. Great demand to read extensively is made today on the college student. Some research specialists insist that college students are expected to read twenty per cent more than they were required to read fifteen or twenty years ago. Without doubt a heavy obligation to read rests on men and women who are beyond college age, if they participate adequately in a literate civilization. In view of the demands on the time of the reader, it is logical that adult readers should give due consideration to the place of rate of reading in a program designed to improve reading techniques, but rate has no value without comprehension and appreciation.

The ability to identify one's self with what is read and therefore to be obedient to the inner compulsion of the printed page was expressed admirably by Ernest Dimnet:*

> Passionate reading not only flies, it skips, but it does so only because it can choose, which is a high intellectual achievement. How do you read the time-table? You skip till you reach your place, then you are indifferent to the whole world and engrossed by your train, its departure, arrival, and connections. The same thing with a map which a motorist lends the anxious cyclist at the cross-roads. The latter's whole soul is in his reading. The same thing with a financial tip in a letter which a friend is waiting for you to return. The same thing with any formula for the production of the philosopher's stone. Whatever we read from intense curiosity gives us the model of how we should always read. Plodding along page after page with an equal attention to each word results in attention to mere words. Attention to words never produces thought, but very promptly results in distractions, so that an honorable effort is brought to nought by its own ill-advised conscientiousness.

The literature of power, *belles lettres*, calls for a different approach

* Reprinted from *The Art of Thinking* by Ernest Dimnet. Copyright, 1928, by Simon and Schuster, Inc.

to rate of reading from that of factual or informational reading material, the literature of knowledge. Literature with a strong aesthetic appeal should be read at the rate that permits the reader to respond to the emotional quality as well as to the pattern of thinking implicit in the material. It is an accepted fact that one reads lyric poetry and the familiar essay slowly and reflectively, but on the other hand the reader may be swept along at a terrific rate by the undertow of a novel of action; he cannot resist reading a story of rapid action rapidly. In fact, he is an incompetent, immature reader if he is unable to respond emotionally and aesthetically to the sweep and dynamic flow of stories and novels of stirring action. The appropriate rate is determined by the reader's ability to establish identification with the author and to project himself into the author's thought and feeling.

When the reader of *The Great Gatsby** reaches the climax of the novel and confronts the following passage that tells him what became of Gatsby, he will probably do spot reading, eager to know the answer. Certainly he will not read words that can easily slip into the background, but will focus on those phrases that emerge from the page as if demanding to be read. The eye, in the following passage, does not go to the end of the line, and then dutifully turn diagonally to the beginning of the next line, and so proceed systematically and rhythmically to the end of the passage. On the contrary, the eye zigzags down the page, taking in eyefuls. Emotional tension, swift tempo, absorption in the story—these are the factors that determine the rate at which the account of Gatsby's death will be read.

> At two o'clock Gatsby bathing-suit left word
> butler any one phoned word brought
> pool. stopped garage pneumatic
> mattress amused guests summer,
> chauffeur helped pump instructions
> open car wasn't taken out under circumstances
> strange, front right fender needed
> repair.
> Gatsby shouldered mattress started pool. Once
> stopped shifted little, chauffeur asked

* From *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Copyright, 1925, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

needed help, shook head moment disappeared among yellowing trees.

No telephone message arrived, butler without sleep waited four o'clock long after any one to give it if it came. I idea Gatsby didn't believe come, perhaps no longer cared. If true felt he lost old warm world, paid high price living too long single dream. must have looked unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves shivered found what grotesque thing a rose raw sunlight scarcely created grass. new world, material without being real, poor ghosts dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about . . . like ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through amorphous trees.

chauffeur one of Wolfsheim's protégés heard shots afterward he could say hadn't thought much them. I drove from station Gatsby's house my rushing anxiously front steps first thing alarmed any one. they knew then, I believe. scarcely word four us, chauffeur, butler, gardener, I hurried pool.

faint, barely perceptible movement water fresh flow from one end urged way toward drain at other. little ripples hardly shadows waves, laden mattress moved down pool. small gust wind that scarcely corrugated surface enough disturb accidental course accidental burden. touch cluster leaves revolved slowly, tracing, like leg transit, thin red circle water.

after we started Gatsby house the gardener saw Wilson's body little way grass, holocaust complete.

At two o'clock Gatsby put on his bathing-suit and left word with the butler that if any one phoned word was to be brought to him at the pool. He stopped at the garage for a pneumatic mattress that had amused his guests during the summer, and the chauffeur helped him pump it up. Then he gave instructions

that the open car wasn't to be taken out under any circumstances—and this was strange, because the front right fender needed repair.

Gatsby shouldered the mattress and started for the pool. Once he stopped and shifted it a little, and the chauffeur asked him if he needed help, but he shook his head and in a moment disappeared among the yellowing trees.

No telephone message arrived, but the butler went without his sleep and waited for it until four o'clock—until long after there was any one to give it to if it came. I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come, and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about . . . like that ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees.

The chauffeur—he was one of Wolfsheim's protégés—heard the shots—afterward he could only say that he hadn't thought anything much about them. I drove from the station directly to Gatsby's house and my rushing anxiously up the front steps was the first thing that alarmed any one. But they knew then, I firmly believe. With scarcely a word said, four of us, the chauffeur, butler, gardener, and I hurried down to the pool.

There was a faint, barely perceptible movement of the water as the fresh flow from one end urged its way toward the drain at the other. With little ripples that were hardly the shadows of waves, the laden mattress moved irregularly down the pool. A small gust of wind that scarcely corrugated the surface was enough to disturb its accidental course with its accidental burden. The touch of a cluster of leaves revolved it slowly, tracing, like the leg of transit, a thin red circle in the water.

It was after we started with Gatsby toward the house that the gardener saw Wilson's body a little way off in the grass, and the holocaust was complete.

Every reader who belongs to the passionate minority of readers will understand the experience described by Charles Morgan in the *Yale Review:*

> The greatest tribute that a writer can earn is not that we keep our eyes fast upon his page, forgetting all else, but that sometimes, without knowing that we have ceased to read, we allow his book to rest, and look out over and beyond it with newly opened eyes.

It may be difficult to find an acceptable definition of style; every critic has his own. But every reader of great literature has come under the spell of style. Those critics who are most hostile to the habit of rapid reading are convinced that the rapid reader cannot savor style. But if the creative reader sets up the proper mental and emotional slant, he does so because he is sensitive to the writer's style. Dozens of phrases can be offered to describe style, but perhaps the best one is: "Style—it is the man." The quality that pervades a passage, the author's spirit—that is style, and no rate of reading must ever prevent the reader's savoring to the fullest degree the style of a passage. Sometimes the irresistible pull of a passage forces the reader to read rapidly. To read slowly, deliberately, would be to miss the essential quality of the passage; the words would be lifeless.

There are various ways by which the reader can acquire the ability to differentiate his rate of reading, if he is a slow, plodding reader, who reads everything in the same way at the same rate.

1. Constant, systematic effort to extend and enrich one's vocabulary is imperative. Words are the medium of communication. They should be open sesames to the thought.

2. A keen awareness of the structure of an article or a book assists the reader in sensing the substance of it. He notes the sign-posts, the words of transition, and is able to anticipate the direction of the author's thought because he recognizes the formula or pattern of the composition; he makes a quick adjustment to it.

3. The quick recognition of a generalization or a conclusion and noting the illustrations that make the generalizations concrete will

facilitate the rate or may guide the reader in making omissions. Some readers may omit the specific instances if the material is familiar.

4. Practice in reading a good deal of rather easy material will help the reader to break up the old pattern of stolid slow reading and to establish a new habitual tempo. Readable historical novels are good material for such practice.

5. Framing a question or defining a problem and then reading to find the answer or the solution will give purpose and direction to one's reading, set the proper pace, and assist in grasping the gist of what is read.

6. Most adult readers insist that they have difficulty in concentrating on what they read. Concentration results from self-discipline. All that any program of instruction can do is to outline desirable procedures, but the student-reader must practice them persistently and intelligently. An urgent consideration is to keep the mind focused on the thought, not on a technique of reading. When the reader becomes self-conscious he is lost; rather he loses the thought. In teaching children, we do not say, "Read this passage carefully," but we pose a question and ask them to read to find the answer. For example: "Read to find the answer to this question: 'How many bales of cotton were produced in Texas in 1935?' "

7. If by virtue of unfortunate early experiences, a reader is a word-by-word reader, then he must make a persistent, conscientious effort to read by phrases. If his preoccupation is with words, he misses the meaning of what he reads. Words in juxtaposition with other words have meaning; not, as a rule, words in isolation. The practice of dividing the editorial of the morning paper into phrases by means of vertical lines will help to establish the habit of phrase reading, if one reads word by word. The practice will emphasize the conclusion that thought units bear a close relation to the structural elements of a sentence; that is, syntactical relations of words give the clue to the thought unit.

Following* is an example of the kind of practice suggested, to establish the habit of phrase reading:

* New York *Times*, April 16, 1951. Reprinted by permission. From an editorial by Anne O'Hare McCormick.

While the East-side, West-side controversy | on the relative importance | of the Pacific and Atlantic fronts | continues to rage in this country, | the atmosphere | in the region in between | becomes more threatening every day. | The so-called Near East, or Middle East, | is much closer to Europe | than it is to the true Orient | of China, Japan, and eastern Russia. | In a plan | for the control of the world | the possession | of the strategic arch | between Turkey and India | provides an ideal position | for flanking maneuvers | against both fronts. | The arch is now sagging and unguarded, | and observers | who have crossed it lately | are of the opinion | that if Russia should decide | to shake it hard | —a move that could be carried out | without an act of war | —there would be a third side | to the present argument.

Iran is shaken now. | But the unhappy country | that stands at the center of the arch, | and between the Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf, | is not the only trouble spot | in the area. | All the dormant fevers | in the Middle East | seem to have become active | all at once. | The temperature rises in Iraq | as the result of the oil crisis | across the border. | The smoldering feud | over the Syrian-Israeli demarcation line | breaks into an open clash. | Today | is election day | in the little Republic of Lebanon, | and the campaign has been marked | by violent incidents | revealing the worried and divided mind | of a predominantly Christian population | on being absorbed | into the predominantly Moslem Arab League. | Egypt is in a ferment | not only on the question | of the withdrawal of British troops | from their base beside the Suez Canal | but of the future rule of the Sudan.

On the other hand, writers can facilitate the appropriate speed or rate of reading, if they will write readably. Materials that please the ear when read aloud lend themselves to rapid reading. Readable material is more conducive to rapid reading than material that is abrupt and unrhythmical. If style lacks flow, reading will be slowed down.

Another consideration concerns the publishers' responsibility to spare readers as many obstacles and interferences as possible, in order

that friction and inertia may not distract the reader's energy from the main business in hand—re-creating the author's thought. A book ought to be a pleasant thing. The paper should be opaque, for the shadow of the print on the reverse side of the page confuses the eye. A book ought to open flat. No reader likes to expend his energy in forcibly holding a book open.

The reader is grateful for ample margins, not too ample but not obviously meager and narrow. The size and kind of type should invite the reader's eye, not discourage it. Most readers deplore the growing tendency to publish books that weigh pounds. One bookstore is reputed to sell books by the pound, 29 cents a pound, five pounds, one dollar.* Readers insist that the physical weight of a book can be a deterrent factor to reading. Many a classic, neglected except by the passionate minority, has experienced a revival of popularity because some publisher elected to give the book an agreeable format.

> To read well is to think well; the eye is
> merely the servant of the alert mind.
>
> R. L. Lyman

* New York *Times*, April 15, 1951.

CHAPTER XII

★

THE FOUNDATION OF CRITICAL READING

> "My teachers," said he, "were hide-bound pedants, without knowledge of man's nature, or of boy's; or of aught save their lexicons and quarterly account books. Innumerable dead vocables (no dead language, for they themselves knew no language) they crammed into us, and called it fostering the growth of the mind. How can an inanimate, mechanical gerund-grinder . . . foster the growth of anything, much more of mind, which grows, not like a vegetable (by having its roots littered with etymological compost), but like a spirit, by mysterious contact of spirit; thought kindling itself at the fire of living thought? How shall *he* give kindling, in whose own inward man there is no live coal, but all is burnt out to a dead grammatical cinder? The professors knew syntax enough; and of the human soul thus much: that it had a faculty called memory and could be acted on through the muscular integument by appliance of birch-rods."
>
> *Sartor Resartus*, Book II. Chap. III
> by Thomas Carlyle

WE have always paid homage to the three R's. From the days of the founding fathers, ability to read has received marked emphasis in American life; in fact, reading skill is regarded as one of the essential elements of western civilization. In recent years, still greater emphasis has been placed on reading. Today the United States acknowledges its avowed purpose to teach every boy and girl how to read as well as his mental potentiality permits, a goal far from being reached, but every year marks progress in the right direction. There are times, however, when those most concerned

with the welfare of the country and particularly of children think that progress in eliminating illiteracy is slow to an unwarranted degree.

According to government records made at the beginning of World War I, the literacy of the nation measured by reading tests was about at the fifth, possibly sixth, grade level. At that time it was the acknowledged policy of the Pulitzer newspapers to address their editorials to fifth grade reading comprehension. After a truce of twenty-five years, when World War II began, the level of literacy had risen about two grades; that is, the average reading skill was approximately that of a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old. In twenty-five years, the nation had achieved a promotion of two grades, rather slow promotion.

It is a mistake to confuse reading achievement and mental age. The average reading skill of the nation, according to reading tests, may be that of a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old, but the average intelligence quotient and mental age are definitely higher than that of a thirteen-year-old. Some people who read and run at the same time and who are not experienced in reading educational statistics have confused reading level and mental age. The innate ability of the average child and adult in the United States, measured by intelligence tests with confirmation by observation, furnishes ample reason for enlisting various agencies to raise the level of literacy of the population, for the people of the United States have the mental ability to read considerably better than they are now doing.

The amount of reading retardation in schools, colleges, and universities has slowed up learning and resulted in a policy of educational appeasement to be deplored. Students are graduated today from high schools and even colleges without the skill to use the English language effectively in speaking, reading, and writing.

The major attack, today, is on improving reading instruction, for the ability to read competently, and the habit of reading what is worth reading are basic to becoming educated. The shortcomings of men in the selective draft in two global wars forced the attention of the American public to the defects in our educational system.

Today almost any statement about reading arrests the attention of the press. Reading is a topic for conversational groups, a subject for lectures, conferences, and institutes, the theme of newspaper and

magazine articles, and books of major proportions. In recent years, judges have insisted vigorously that juvenile delinquency is closely bound up with reading failure in a child's early school years; and they trace a straight line from failure to read to general school failure, to truancy, and delinquency, with boys and girls arraigned in Children's Courts for flouting the law. Certainly, not all reading failure winds up in court, but judges and social workers have solid ground for their argument.

The lack of adequate reading skill has led to sharp questioning to determine the responsibility for the failure to provide young men and women with the prime essential in securing an education and thus helping them to become vocationally and socially adequate. Although the responsibility for reading retardation might be a subject for controversy, there is unanimous agreement that retardation in reading should be forestalled by providing children in the elementary grades with the kind of opportunity to which all children are entitled. The subject of reading has become one of focal attention on the part of pediatricians, neurologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, ophthalmologists, optometrists, the research specialist in education, and particularly of teachers and parents.

The importance of reading is not a debatable issue, but there exists a great variety of opinions as to the measures to be used to raise the level of literacy of students. It is unfortunate that "Reading is fun" was for many years the slogan of the schools. The implication of the slogan ignores the fact that reading is an art whose mastery requires patient practice and study and analysis. It is equally unfortunate that in most areas of the United States, instruction in reading does not extend beyond the elementary grades. Yet no fourteen-year elementary school graduate has the experience and mental maturity to develop the reading skills he must have if he is to become a fully literate adult.

It is a calamity that so many educational leaders have subscribed to the procedure that all school work is a game, that work, solid sincere work, is taboo, and that reading is just fun, that is, light entertainment, and that the comics are acceptable reading materials. The end-product of this educational belief is a nation with the reading level expected of fourteen-year-olds. Some research specialists place

the reading level even lower. For confirmation, witness the books, magazines, and newspapers of the newsstand.

The reading-for-fun approach is based on the assumption that young people do not like to work and that everything must be sugar-coated. But they do like to work, provided they are convinced that the work has validity and that they can do it successfully. They are elated when they accomplish a hard job. The trouble is that they are often not taught how to succeed. So long as schools claim that reading is merely fun, and provide vapid childish materials in school readers, too large a proportion of boys and girls will grow up to join the ranks of the semi-literate electorate.

Reading can be fun, or rather it can provide entertainment ranging from light to serious recreation. It is well to think of recreation in terms of its etymology, re-creation. If young people master the art of reading, they may look forward to fun, delight, pleasure, re-creation as long as they live. In fact, they have not mastered the art of reading until they can read with intelligent delight. And this they can do, but they need systematic, persistent instruction continued at least through the freshman year of college. Progress in becoming a discriminating reader may be slow, but it is a rewarding experience. Employing one's mental faculties critically can be and should be pleasurable. Profit and pleasure in reading are not mutually exclusive. The enjoyment of *Hamlet* is not marred because the reader senses the emotional clashes and the logical, inevitable relation of incident to incident, and the crucial scene in the middle of the play that definitely forecasts the end. To read thus is to experience pleasure of a high order that is impossible for a reader who sees *Hamlet* merely as a story of selfish ambition and murder. Beethoven's symphonies furnish exquisite pleasure to a listener who is aware of the *motif* and its recurrence in various keys; to him, the symphony is not just a succession of sounds that have no obvious relationship. The listener delights in the pattern. It seems logical to expect the reader to make adequate effort to read well—effort comparable to that of the writer who originated a composition.

It is not un-American, as some educators have intimated, to insist that our national system of education needs reenforcement in its program of reading instruction; in fact, the ideals of democracy

make it imperative that every child should be able to face adulthood as free from handicaps as possible. Certainly, any adult who is retarded in reading is handicapped. We have the testimony of two world wars, the educational statistics of the C. C. C. camps, the figures released annually by boards of education, the research reports of publishers, personal observation, all pointing to the need to raise the level of literacy in the United States. It is an obligation to direct our major efforts to serving the needs of young people.

The depression of the 1930's gave impetus to the cause of improving reading instruction. Because of a large number of educated men and women who were unemployed, the Works Progress Administration (the W. P. A.) recruited them to serve as auxiliary teachers in elementary and secondary schools. Under the supervision of regularly appointed teachers and supervisors, the additional teachers gave special assistance to students who were not making normal progress because of a reading deficiency. The schools of New York City profited especially by the educational work sponsored by the federal government.

One of the city high schools in the Bronx, the Theodore Roosevelt High School, in the early thirties had made a reading survey of the seven thousand students enrolled in that school. Data concerning the reading level, the intelligence quotient, and the mental age of every student were available in the school files. Because of this head-start in Roosevelt, the high school division of the Board of Education assigned approximately thirty young men and women to the department of English already staffed with forty teachers. Out of the seven thousand students, the five hundred most retarded in reading were selected, and a reading school was set up within the frame of the large high school. An elaborate program of testing, teaching, and supervising was got under way and continued for several years, supported by funds from the federal government. The story of the project has been told in detail in a monograph published by the National Council of Teachers of English.*

Many of the techniques and procedures in testing and teaching initiated in the reading project in Roosevelt High School have been

* *Teaching High School Students to Read* by Stella S. Center and Gladys L. Persons, published by Appleton-Century, 1937.

continued in various organizations; they were developed and expanded in the Reading Clinic in the Division of General Education of New York University (later called the Reading Institute).

The Reading Clinic of New York University (1936–1950) was regarded as a pilot institution to contribute to the improvement of reading instruction. In the course of its fifteen years of existence, it enrolled approximately ten thousand young people and adults, who came not only from the metropolitan area, but from every section of the United States, and from foreign countries as well. All were concerned with the problem of their reading. Some were retarded in reading skills; some were superior readers who were convinced that they had the ability to read with still greater skill. Out of this experience that provided an opportunity national in scope to study the problem of reading, certain convictions as to diagnosis and instruction emerged, and particularly convictions as to how the foundation of competent, critical reading might be laid in the elementary and secondary stages of education. The Reading Clinic of New York University had several divisions but all were closely integrated by one controlling purpose: how a student might improve his skill, his taste, and his habits of reading.

The development of the Reading Clinic conformed to the particular and insistent demands made on it. There were evening sessions for adults; the preceding chapters describe the kind of work undertaken with them. The day sessions were reserved for boys and girls in the elementary and secondary stages of their education. The Clinic maintained a diagnostic service that studied the individual needs of thousands of students who were sent to the Clinic for diagnosis only, by the schools, public, independent, and parochial, where the students were enrolled. The diagnostic division of the Clinic, after a careful study extending over several days, rendered a report with recommendations to the cooperating schools.

A Reading School was one of the main divisions of the Reading Clinic; it had an average annual enrollment of seventy students on primary, intermediate, and secondary levels, and it had a teaching staff that permitted a quota of approximately six students to the teacher. It was mainly in the Reading School that the validity of testing and teaching procedures suitable for each student was the

subject of study and research on the part of the faculty. During the summer session of six weeks, special attention was given to the reading needs of college men and women who had discovered the necessity of improving their reading skills if they were to receive the maximum benefit from their college attendance. It should be noted, too, that during the regular sessions of the day school, students who had completed their preparatory training came to the Reading Clinic for instruction in reading before proceeding to four years of college work.

The aim of the diagnosis made at the Reading Clinic was to discover as nearly as possible a student's status. Reading proceeds satisfactorily for most people, when there is good coordination of all their powers, physical, mental, and emotional. The diagnosis broke down into:

I 1. Tests of vision, hearing, dominance, general physical condition, and in some instances, the endocrine system.
2. Mental tests: linguistic and performance.
3. Tests of personality structure to discover the extent of emotional maturity.
II Tests of achievement, especially language skills, and particularly reading skill.

The information gained from objective testing was supplemented by informal conferences with parents and students to learn something of a student's physical history, his scholastic achievement, and his environment. These tests were undertaken with students on elementary, secondary, and college levels. With adults in the evening sessions, the diagnosis was limited, but all students had a reading analysis. Out of the diagnoses certain characteristics and facts emerged with persistent regularity.

The Clinic had a preponderance of boys; yet that fact must not be construed as a reflection on their intelligence. According to elaborate intelligence tests, both linguistic and performance, administered by expert psychologists, a boy might have remarkably good intelligence, yet be greatly retarded in his reading. Some people find it easy to master symbols and some do not. It was not unusual to enroll boys

in their early teens who read on primary level—some who could not read at all—although they came, most of them, from homes socially and financially secure, their parents well educated and successful in business or professional life.

The more intelligent a boy is, the more disturbed he becomes if he is retarded in his reading, and frequently the pressure by parents serves to increase the boy's anxiety about himself. In the United States, boys are subjected to a great deal of pressure by their parents, a procedure that often defeats itself. Boys have more sensitiveness than they are usually credited with having; a boy may put up a bold, or a nonchalant, or an indifferent front to conceal his sense of inferiority or his sensitiveness. The first thing that a reading clinic or a school should do is to build up a boy's belief in himself; low morale and intellectual accomplishment are rarely found associated.

More often than not, the examining psychologist discovered that a boy had greater mental potentialities than he was able to utilize. He might have been labelled slow, even below-average in mentality by his parents and his school, when adequate testing indicated average, frequently superior, mentality. Few experiences are so rewarding to a teacher as to be able to tell a discouraged boy that he has a good mind and to help him to make use of it, when he has accepted failure as his lot in life.

In the hands of an expert psychologist, certain types of personality appraisals throw considerable light on the inner springs of the frustrated child who is so blocked emotionally that it is impossible for him to cooperate with instruction. A child who is tense, worried, fearful, unhappy, jealous, rejected, cannot focus his mind on intellectual pursuits any more than can an adult who is consumed with anxiety and worry. Children are people, and adults should have insight into a child's psychology. One measure that proved very useful in speeding up the understanding of boys and girls was the Rorschach technique,* but it can be harmful if not properly administered and interpreted. The implications of the Rorschach technique are valuable to the teaching staff in clearing away the barriers that hinder the learning process.

* *The Rorschach Technique* by Bruno Klopfer, published by World Book Company. 1942.

The Rorschach technique was supplemented by the Thematic Apperception Test, devised by Dr. Henry Alexander Murray of Harvard, a test that encourages a student to give free rein to his imagination. The pictures of the test suggest to the student stories by which he unwittingly becomes autobiographical, thus enabling his teachers to become acquainted with him without obviously invading his reserve.

Experience with the boys and girls at the Clinic made it obvious that all who are concerned with children should make sure of the status of a child's eyesight. The ideal is two good eyes that focus properly; yet it is safe to say that fully half the students who came to the day sessions of the Clinic had a visual handicap of some kind. All eye-specialists are concerned with refraction, but not all give attention to fusion. Many children have a muscle imbalance, or strabismus, that is overlooked unless it is so pronounced as to cause a disfiguring squint. There is much controversy as to whether or not anything can be done to remedy a muscle imbalance. Some eye specialists attempt relief with glasses; some with exercises; some resort to an operation. There are children who suppress one eye, although it may be a good eye, depending on the other eye alone, unaware of the effect of disuse on vision. All are agreed that reading makes great demands on the vision, and that no child should attempt to read until he has attained a muscle maturity and coordination that enable him to read without strain.

It is equally imperative that a child's hearing be carefully tested, especially if he has difficulty in discriminating between sounds and therefore will be slow to read and to spell. Every child needs training in phonics; if he does not learn from teachers the sounds associated with letters and words he will devise his own system of phonics. It is conceded that some children are predominantly ear-minded, others eye-minded; it is unscientific and unreasonable to subject all children to the same method of learning to read; they need a variety of approaches. Many a child is labelled dull or lazy when his difficulty is inability to hear sounds acutely.

One other physical factor in the situation cannot be ignored, the endocrine development of boys and girls; the advice of an endocrinologist is frequently needed when it becomes obvious that the lack of

proper physical development makes boys particularly restless and inattentive and easily distracted from study. Arrested endocrine development can have a damaging effect on the total personality of the student. Reading skill is developed when there is good coordination of mind and body, for reading requires the coordination of all a child's powers. The Reading Clinic erred on the side of caution in recommending to parents the desirability of consulting an endocrinologist, but it should be added that some boys who received endocrine treatment and responded to it were transformed in behavior and in ability to accept instruction.

It is controversial just what is the relation of left dominance to reading-learning. There were many instances of left-eye and left-hand dominance, and instances of mixed dominance. Many of these children were mirror writers and mirror readers, making the usual classical mistakes of reversing *was* and *saw*, *on* and *no*, and reversing numerical figures as well; for instance, reading 21 as 12. There were rare instances of reversals in speech: for example, *walkside* for *sidewalk* and *cakepan* for *pancake*. Some children with right-side dominance were given to reversals but almost all students outgrow the reversal tendency. It is very unusual to find an adult who reverses letters and symbols. It is accepted procedure not to change a child's dominance, but help the left-handed child to learn how to write legibly with his left hand. There are instances of left-handed children who developed a tendency to stammer and stutter when they were forced to use the right hand.

After an elaborate diagnosis, a program of instruction was arranged for each student in the Reading School. The major emphasis was on reading material that challenged the student's interest in ideas, the main purpose of the course being to quicken the student's intellect, and make it as keen and alert as possible. The reading materials drew on science, discovery, invention, geography, history, biography—the instructors always beginning with material that could be read easily but increasing the difficulty and maturity of the material as rapidly as the student's progress warranted advancement. It was demonstrated repeatedly that boys will not accept childish material; they may be retarded in reading but they are usually mature socially. We shall do the cause of reading a disservice if we proceed on the

assumption that it does not matter what a child reads so long as he reads. It matters greatly what one reads. The mind grows by what it feeds on.

We hear a good deal from the older generation about the "good old days" with the implication that there was no difficulty in teaching reading in former times, the inference being that everybody learned to read from McGuffey's readers; the critic of present day methods usually remarks triumphantly that a child learned his a b c's in the good old days. What the critics overlook is the casualty list; countless children did not learn how to read; only the very fit survived through a process of trial and error; they supplemented the conscientious drill of their teachers. There are no statistics about the failures of the good old days; the failures were inarticulate. No one discounts the efforts of the teachers of former days, but they did not assume the democratic responsibility of teaching all boys and girls. Today, we know more about the psychology of learning; we have been forced to know more, for we are trying to teach not just the mentally superior, but all children with varied demands on educators.

A child's major effort must be directed to mastering symbols, associating meaning with the symbol; yet from the beginning, direction should be given to developing interest in what lies between the covers of a book. Interest in fairy tales, folk tales, myths, hero tales, legends, poems, stories, can be fostered from the day a child enters school, the content and style becoming more mature as the student becomes more mature in mind and spirit. It is a logical transition to a free reading program, the books selected in accordance with individual taste, with the choice made from both the literature of knowledge and the literature of power.

In the School of the Reading Clinic, much emphasis was placed on acquiring skill in writing. It was demonstrated repeatedly that skill in one language art was closely related to other language skills. As the reader became more mature, he became interested in what makes a piece of writing effective; he learned how to use the appropriate reading technique to match the writing technique.

Little if any progress can be made in mastering reading techniques without skill in word mastery. Reading is the art of getting meaning from word-symbols arranged in juxtaposition. Children need instruc-

tion in various approaches to word-mastery. Most children learn by the visual and the auditory method; some need the reinforcement that comes from the mastery of the word by kinesthetic, associational, or contextual approaches. As soon as maturity permits, the child should have training in how to use the dictionary; he should have much practice in inferring meaning from contextual clues. The study of spelling, supplemented by practice with a typewriter, was an important phase of word study in the Reading Clinic.

Students in the elementary grades need to do much oral reading, some of it with a speech recording device. In that way, the student hears his own recording and is able to criticize himself. Oral reading encourages the lengthened eye-voice span, the anticipation of meaning, the understanding of grammatical subordination of the dependent parts of a sentence, accuracy in discriminating between sounds, and awareness of the emotional atmosphere of a composition. Oral reading provides a completely synthetic re-creation of the printed page.

Everything that concerns the child is of concern to his teacher of reading. The faculty is conscious of the necessity of guidance and welds the whole learning environment into a unity. Guidance can be systematic, or informal when student and teacher feel the need for conference. Some students have experienced such deep-seated frustration as the result of chronic failure that psychiatric sessions seem the only remedy for personality disturbances and behavior problems. All good teaching has a therapeutic value, but most good teachers say little about therapy, relying on valid work well done to make its impression on the student.

The controlling principle dominating all procedures at the Reading Clinic was the obligation to give each student the guidance that he particularly needed, at the same time directing him to become an adult of mental, emotional, and social maturity. While the spirit of the Reading Clinic was democratic in theory and practice, with no discrimination on the score of race, religion, social or financial status, the needs of the superior student received due consideration. A democracy needs not only an educated electorate but leaders of mental and moral integrity as well. One of the major contributions of the Reading Clinic was insistence on the rights of superior young people to the kind of education that will enable them to make a

genuine contribution to the total social economy of the country.

What can be done to lay the foundation that will insure the reading skills of adults who will read with intelligent delight? The child is father of the man.

1. *Know what sort of mind a child has and treat it with respect, challenging it to hard work.*

2. *Do everything humanly possible to help a child achieve emotional stability and maturity.*

3. *Place all possible scientific and medical resources at the service of children to insure their health.*

4. *Help a child to master the art of reading so far as his potentialities permit and inculcate in him an irresistible compulsion to read the books worthy of being read.*

5. *Help a child to find in books a means of developing ideals of ethical conduct and social responsibility.*

6. *Help a child to retain his sense of wonder and magic.*

The preceding statement records objectively the facts in regard to the Reading Clinic, but it fails to include a record of the intangibles and the imponderables present in every human situation. The fifteen years I spent as director of the Reading Clinic and the Reading School of New York University telescoped into a brief span experiences that represented chronologically many times that number of years. It would be dishonest to claim a record of uniform successes. The work was difficult, the hours usually twice as long as a normal working day; the schedule permitted few vacations or holidays; the demands on my sympathy and emotions were at times excessive; yet perspective prompts me to express gratitude that I had an experience allowed few teachers. I recall with appreciation those members of my staff who were steadfast in their belief in young people's possibilities and who cheerfully undertook the seemingly impossible, assured that the impossible is often surprisingly possible where young people

are concerned. We were convinced of the truth of the prophecy that where there is no vision the people perish.

The Reading Clinic was singularly fortunate in the consulting specialists in the medical profession and in educational research who served the Clinic far beyond the call of professional duty. The Clinic was fortunate, too, in the wise cooperation of certain schools where our "graduates" were enrolled after leaving the Reading Clinic.

It was necessary to have an unusually large staff of secretaries. Extensive records were kept, not only of the students enrolled in the Reading School but also of all students in various parts of the country whom the Clinic had tested. In fact, the secretaries, the psychologists, the teachers, the administrators were a unified group concerned with the welfare of every student.

We were thoroughly convinced of the value and the necessity of testing intelligence and achievement and of evaluating personality by every sound technique approved by scholars in the field of educational research. We spent considerable time in administering and interpreting tests; yet after all the statistical data had been duly studied, we knew that in every child there was an area of intelligence and emotions beyond the reach of tests and statistics, and that we should always anticipate the unrevealed and the potential in every child. It was my profound conviction that we should make no hasty judgment in regard to any child; we were conscious to a marked degree of our fallibility. We were never willing to suspend our efforts to help a child who had been labelled a failure, believing that a sense of failure in children is more tragic than it is in men and women.

A sharp distinction should be made between the boys and girls of the Lower School and the students of the Upper School of the Reading Clinic. Most of the students in the Lower School came to the Clinic because they had failed in the conventional school to learn how to read and consequently they had failed in their school work. The first efforts of the faculty were directed toward creating a feeling of self-confidence. Most of the students were boys; they wanted to read—wanted with all their hearts—and they had tried with all their might to learn how to read, but they had failed. They felt humiliated by their failure. Most of the boys were convinced that they had the

intelligence to read, and they could not understand their dilemma. Until the teachers could build up the boys' faith in themselves, nothing could be accomplished. But the teachers' efforts did not take the form of exhortation and pressure; their efforts were directed toward finding out how a particular boy could best learn to read. A student's belief in himself could be established only when he could read what appealed to his mind and interests on the level of his maturity.

The focus of the teaching had to be on mastering the symbol, the word, in a context of meaning. The student might be eye-minded or ear-minded; he might have visual irregularities; he might have a left-side or a mixed dominance; his mental efforts might be frustrated by emotional complications; his physical growth might be retarded in some respect. He might have a speech difficulty; he might have accepted failure as his life pattern. But he lived in a literate civilization, and the obligation to read rested on him heavily. And the obligation to teach him to read rested on his teacher.

The educational philosophy of the Reading Clinic was based on the conviction of the worth and dignity of each boy and girl. All instruction and discipline proceeded from the conviction that children are people, each one entitled to develop within the framework of his inalienable rights.

The atmosphere of the Clinic was serious and at the same time cheerful. Everybody worked and demonstrated daily the therapeutic value of work. There was no sentimentality; there was no coddling; work was assigned and work was done. Infringements of rules that invaded the rights of others did not pass unnoticed, but the teacher tried to get the law-breaker to see the significance of his error as it concerned himself and others.

The students in the Upper School of the Reading Clinic ranged in age from fifteen to twenty-five, young men and women, each one with distinctive needs and interests. Some were brilliant and looked forward to college life, bent on making the most of college environment, but convinced that they must learn to read competently. Others who expected to go to college were doubtful of their success; their minds were undisciplined and the printed page furnished them

little stimulus. Still other students had never completed their high school course and had a record of school failure. They wanted to improve their reading and return to a secondary school.

Some of these students were well-poised, sure of themselves with their eyes on definite goals. Other students presented even more than the usual frustrations associated with adolescence and needed all the guidance that the Clinic could furnish to help them to get set firmly on the road to maturity. Again, the enrollment of young men exceeded that of the young women, further evidence of the social pressure to which boys are subjected in American life with consequent frustrations.

The urgent need of all the students was training in how to think, for reading is thinking. These young people, whether superior or retarded, lacked the skill to follow a train of thought, undistracted by the subordinate and the parenthetical; they did not distinguish between a generalization and a concrete instance related to the generalization. It was a rare experience to find a student who had a working knowledge of grammar that he could utilize in getting the thought of a long sentence. A meager vocabulary was a lack characteristic of the whole group. Strange to report, it was not unusual to find students at the secondary and even college level who had never voluntarily read a book. Their acquaintance with literature was limited to class-room discussion of certain classics, supplemented by a condensation of a book in a magazine, or a screen version of a novel that served them for "book reports." It was characteristic of the students of the Upper School that expressing their ideas in writing caused as much difficulty as did reading. As teachers will testify, all the language skills are closely related, and success in one phase of the language arts more often than not is accompanied by success in other phases. The needs of the students automatically indicated the course of study we provided for them. Their response, on the whole, was good. I emphasized constantly that the Reading School was an interim not a terminal school, and that a student's stay in the school was a matter within his control. When he could return to the conventional school or college, and meet its reading demands, he would conclude his stay at the Reading Clinic; but he had to demonstrate his ability to succeed in the conventional school.

Early in the history of the Reading Clinic, it became unmistakably clear that I had to know the parents as well as I knew the students. I could, except in very rare instances, count on the parents' affection for their children and an earnest desire to promote the children's welfare. Convinced of my sincere interest in the boys and girls, parents were willing to listen to reports on diagnoses and analyses of a children's difficulties that were often as disturbing as a surgeon's report must be at times. Hours and hours had to be spent in trying to get parents acquainted with their own children; certainly, it is a wise father that knows his own son. Several times each school year, all the patrons of the school were invited to the Reading School to hear discussions of topics that threw light on the purposes and instruction of the school—topics drawn from psychology, psychiatry, endocrinology, vision, hearing, intelligence testing, methods of instruction. The teachers of the Reading School labored to establish understanding and cooperation of parents and teachers.

The failure to read is a symptom of maladjustment in some phase of a child's inheritance or environment or development. All efforts to teach a child to read must be accompanied by assistance that helps him to achieve physical, mental, and emotional development. As a rule, most children, young and older, do not read if there is maladjustment. And in the category of maladjustment, we must include failure to give a child the particular kind of instruction that will enable him to master symbols.

Certain facts connected with the student-body of the Reading School of the Clinic emerged with unmistakable clarity. A child, like an adult, longs for a sense of security; it is indispensable to him; without security, the ground is cut from under his feet. One of the most devastating influences on children today is the increase of divorce, with all the disorganization of the home that divorce brings in its train. Unless children can live in homes that are comparatively peaceful and normal, they will grow up to add to the present confusion. It is tragic that a child should not have some kind of religious affiliation; he needs to be anchored in a system of beliefs that minister to his moral and spiritual welfare. It is the home, the religious institution, the school, the community, that provide the framework in which every child maintains his existence. To the extent that anyone

of these factors fails the child, to that extent the odds are against him and he must struggle harder to achieve maturity.

Part of the educational creed formulated by the Reading School was the conviction that we should not use competition as motivation to induce boys and girls to learn. I agree entirely with the late Frederick W. Sanderson, headmaster of Oundle, who said in an address in London in 1922:

> "I have always held that competition is a secondary interest and creation a primary instinct. Competition dwindles and passes away. It is cheap and easy to arouse the motive; it is a swift motive and on the surface of things ready for you, but it is not even a powerful motive. Half the boys it dispirits and leaves idle and useless."*

The Reading staff agreed that we should have no prizes, no blue ribbons, nothing that would encourage students to compete with one another; a student competed with his own record, but he was not encouraged to compare his record with that of another. Competition has been in effect so long as a motivating force in schools, business, society, national and international affairs, that its value is accepted, unfortunately, without question. We found that the sense of expanding power was an effective force in accomplishing change in boys and girls.

The experience of the teachers of the Reading School was one of rich compensations. The transformation in the students was convincingly evident, and the subjective judgment of the instructors was reinforced by the results of objective testing.

The following selection from *The Egyptian*** describes that flashing moment when an Egyptian boy more than a thousand years before the Christian era suddenly began to read, that is, to comprehend the meaning of symbols. The miracle of reading that reveals a new heaven and a new earth is the same experience throughout the ages, whether occurring in Egypt thousands of years ago or in Manhattan in the twentieth century. Oneh, the gentle, patient, wise teacher-priest who recited to his pupils the legends and traditions of Egypt,

* *Sanderson of Oundle*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1926.

** From *The Egyptian* by Mika Waltari, translated by Naomi Walford. Copyright, 1949, by G. P. Putnam's Sons. Courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

and who wrought his miracle of teaching on the tumbled-down veranda of his home, is the spiritual brother of Mark Hopkins on one end of a log facing a boy on the other end.

> A miracle happened during my school days and happened so suddenly that I still remember that hour as one of revelation. It was a fair, cool day in spring when the air was full of bird song and storks were repairing their old nests on the roofs of the mud huts. The water had gone down, and fresh green shoots were springing from the earth. In all the gardens, seeds were being sown and plants bedded out. It was a day for adventure, and we could not sit still on Oneh's rickety old veranda, where the mud bricks crumbled under one's hand. I was scratching at those everlasting symbols—letters for cutting in stone and beside them the abbreviated signs used for writing on paper—when suddenly some forgotten word of Oneh's, some queer flash within myself, spoke and brought these characters to life. The pictures became a word, the word a syllable, the syllable a letter. When I set picture to picture, new words leaped forth—living words, quite distinct from the symbols. Any yokel can understand one picture, but two together have meaning only for the literate. I believe that everyone who has studied writing and learned to read knows what I am trying to say. The experience was to me more exciting, more fascinating than snatching a pomegranate from a fruit seller's basket—sweeter than a dried date, delicious as water to the thirsty.
>
> From that time I needed no urging but soaked up Oneh's learning as dry earth soaks up the flood waters of the Nile, and I quickly learned to write.

The Reading Clinic was much concerned with what happened to the students after they left the Reading School and followed its "alumni" with genuine interest. The cooperating schools made detailed reports on the progress of the students enrolled with them, enabling us to know how successful our students were in maintaining themselves in the conventional school. We were especially interested in the college and war record of our students, and were encouraged to note a growing tendency on the part of colleges and universities to inaugurate courses in reading improvement in the freshman year.

One impression made on me became more and more pronounced

as year succeeded year at the Reading Clinic. Most of the difficulties and complications that children endure could be avoided. That observation may seem platitudinous, but so much is at stake it can not be repeated too often if the repetition could bring about action that might lessen the woes of childhood. The welfare of children is determined largely by the intelligence and unselfish affection of parents, and by the professional skill and generous service of the teaching profession.

The students of the Reading School were a cross-section of society, with the needs and the problems of all children. They differed from other children in that their parents could afford to place them in a situation where their needs were analyzed and a staff of experienced teachers and psychologists attempted to guide them through crises in their growth to mature, well-rounded development.

It is a fortunate thing that attention today is centered on reading, but reading is something more than merely identifying little black marks on a white page. A teacher of reading must be concerned with everything that concerns a child—his physical well-being, his intellectual development, his emotional maturity, his social relationships, and his moral sense. Reading, if it is successful, requires the coordination of all our powers. Certainly, we must proceed on that assumption in teaching young people.

And so I return to my original statement that the Reading Clinic with its various services was designed to be a pilot institution, to demonstrate that what was done for a small group of students should in time be done for all boys and girls, if they are to achieve their complete maturity. Perhaps when the country awakens to the realization that children are its most valuable asset, barring none, perhaps funds for their needs will be provided, even though it means spending less on what is useless and destructive.

> Children are a man's riches, the greatest of his possessions, and the whole fortune of his house depends on whether they turn out ill or well.
>
> Plato




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